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THESIS

U.S. POST-CONFLICT INTEGRATION POLICY OF MILITIAS IN IRAQ

by

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March 2008

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

This thesis aims to examine what effect the United States policy towards militias in Iraq has on the security, stability and troop levels. Conventional wisdom regarding the imperative to eliminate militias in Iraq rests upon the correct observation that the state is locked in a struggle over the legitimate use of force, and therefore over power and authority, with the militias, but fails to appreciate that the militia may have more popular legitimacy than the state. Recognizing this calls for a reconsideration of policy responses to the militia phenomenon. This thesis will argue that while military defeat is tactically feasible, it is unlikely to lead to strategic success because the militias have established popular legitimacy and military attacks by an occupying power are only likely to increase it. For similar reasons, engagement of the militia is likely to be more efficacious. The thesis will use two case studies to investigate which policy might work best for Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction operations in Iraq. A comparison is adopted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of defeat and engagement as alternative military strategies employ by an occupying power vis-à-vis indigenous militia forces in the Middle East. The first case study is the United States occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2007. The second case study is the British occupation of Palestine from 1920 to 1948. The thesis will conclude with an analysis of similarities between each case, potential policy prescription for the U.S., avenues for future research and some comments regarding the semantics of words.

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U.S. POST CONFLICT INTEGRATION POLICY OF MILITIAS IN IRAQ

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to examine what effect the United States policy towards militias in Iraq has on the security, stability and troop levels. Conventional wisdom regarding the imperative to eliminate militias in Iraq rests upon the correct observation that the state is locked in a struggle over the legitimate use of force, and therefore over power and authority, with the militias, but fails to appreciate that the militia may have more popular legitimacy than the state. Recognizing this calls for a reconsideration of policy responses to the militia phenomenon. This thesis will argue that while military defeat is tactically feasible, it is unlikely to lead to strategic success because the militias have established popular legitimacy and military attacks by an occupying power are only likely to increase it. For similar reasons, engagement of the militia is likely to be more efficacious. The thesis will use two case studies to investigate which policy might work best for Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction operations in Iraq. A comparison is adopted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of defeat and engagement as alternative military strategies employ by an occupying power vis-à-vis indigenous militia forces in the Middle East. The first case study is the United States occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2007. The second case study is the British occupation of Palestine from 1920 to 1948. The thesis will conclude with an analysis of similarities between each case, potential policy prescription for the U.S., avenues for future research and some comments on the semantics of words.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Many different organizations have resisted coalition forces passively and actively since the beginning of the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003. These groups include Iraqi nationalist parties, regional and global insurgent organizations, transnational criminal groups and local criminal gangs, and sectarian militias. Although these organizations have highly diverse goals and objectives, the tendency to lump them together as "terrorists" undermines the ability of policy makers to respond to each appropriately. Some of these organizations, such as Al Qaeda and Ansar al Sunnah, have a clear and unwavering commitment to the destruction of the Iraqi government and the U.S. led Coalition. On the other hand, Shia militias, most notably the Mahdi Militia and the Badr Corps, have much more complex strategies. Militias sometimes cooperate with the Iraqi government and coalition forces, at other times challenge them politically, and at still other times resist them violently. Political factions supported by militias are currently participating in the Iraqi government. These unclear and mixed signals have left coalition forces in a quandary about how to respond effectively to the challenge presented by Iraqi militias. Over the course of the occupation Coalition policy on the Shia militias has varied from kinetic military action to voluntary disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, to indirect support for Iraqi government policies to abolish them legally.

In terms of military strategy, a "one size fits all" counterinsurgency strategy, involving the elimination or destruction of the enemy, has been implemented with a view toward achieving short term success. Yet as retired United States Marine Corps General Charles C. Krulak once said: "Bullets help sanitize an operational area, they don't win a war."[1] A key component in establishing an effective military policy in Iraq will be to understand the different types of resistance organizations that operate in a military commander's Area of Responsibility (AOR). There is a consensus in both policy and strategy discussions that Shia militias must be eliminated if a stable and democratic state

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[1] Quoted in McFate, Montgomery and Jackson, Andrea V., "The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition," *Military Review, The Professional Journal of the U.S. Army* LXXXVI, January-February (2006): 61.

are to be established, but there has been little investigation of the foundations of this consensus. This thesis seeks to question this consensus through a comparative investigation of the effects of alternative strategies toward militia forces in Iraq and elsewhere.

A.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Since 2004, U.S. policy makers, military leaders and academics have all argued that a policy of elimination of militias was needed for Iraq to achieve stability. In April 2004, a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) official announced: "Our objective is the complete elimination of militias."[2] Another Coalition official stated that same month that "no state can exist in which sub-national entities are allowed to have their own private armies or armed forces."[3] In June 2004, the CPA announced the "successful completion of negotiations on the nationwide transition and reintegration of militias…previously outside state control."[4] This policy officially considered any armed force that remained outside of state control illegal, and committed the Coalition to dealing with them harshly. Beehner, a specialist on Iraq, acknowledges numerous requests made by the U.S. for the Iraqi government to eliminate militias, even though in some cases they were known to serve as part of the security apparatus.[5] The consensus that the militia must be eliminated for stability to be established is shared by academic analysts. Mowle, Diamond, Schwarz, Hashim, and Schultz et al., all argue that defeating militias is the only way that U.S. forces can succeed in Iraq.[6]

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[2] Hashim, 300.

[3] Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 300-301.

[4] "Armed Forces and Militia Agreement Announced," in Coalition Provisional Authority [database online]. Baghdad, Iraq, June 5, 2004 [cited News Release]. Available June 2004 from http://www.iraqcoalition.org/pressreleases/20040604a_MNFI.html (accessed March 30, 2007).

[5] "Iraq: Militia Groups," in Council on Foreign Relations [database online]. Washington, D.C., June 9, 2005 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.cfr.org/publication/8175/ (accessed April 28, 2007).

[6] Richard H. Schulz, Douglas Farah, and Itamara V. Lochard, "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Policy" (Ph.D. diss., United States Air Force Institute for National Security Studies, 2004), 1-89.; Thomas Mowle, "Iraq's Militia Problem," *Survival* 48, no. 3 (2006): 41-58.; Larry Diamond, "Iraq and Democracy: The Lessons Learned," *Current History* 105, no. 687 (2006): 34.; Anthony Schwarz, "Iraq's Militias: The True Threat to Coalition Success in Iraq," *Parameters* (Spring 2007): 55-71; Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq,* 482.

However, this consensus rests upon a partial understanding of the role of the militias in Iraqi society. Mowle's description of militias as "death squads, ethnic cleansers, and religious thugs" overemphasizes the negative aspects of Shia militias and ignores their defensive activities and popular legitimacy.[7] Schultz makes no distinction between insurgents, terrorists, militias, and criminal organizations as armed groups "that will continue to pose serious and increasingly dangerous security challenges to states."[8] Diamond maintains that militias only serve as "armed groups controlled by political parties and political movements [that] use this private force to aggrandize their power, intimidate voters, and create an undemocratic playing field."[9] Schwarz states that militias pose the greatest threat to coalition success because they "weaken government influence by providing unofficial (and effective) security in localized areas using illegal methods." [10] Despite explicitly recognizing that militias are considered "legitimate entities acting morally in the absence of effective national, provincial or local security institutions," he too insists upon their elimination.[11] Hashim states that "militias are among the greatest obstacles to political stability and economic reconstruction in societies trying to recover from conflict or seeking to prevent a descent into incipient civil war."[12] This conclusion is based on the assumption of a fully functioning government with a cohesive professional military that can defeat the insurgency in Iraq, allowing U.S. forces to establish a smaller occupational footprint.

Predictably, the policy of integrating the militia into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and/or eliminating them has failed on both counts. In August 2005, Major General Douglas Lute, the Director of Operations for Iraq and Afghanistan for United States Central Command stated that militias remained "an obstacle to the achievement of

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[7] Thomas Mowle, "Iraq's Militia Problem," *Survival* 48, no. 3 (2006): 41.

[8] Richard H. Schulz, Douglas Farah, and Itamara V. Lochard, "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Policy" (Ph.D. diss., United States Air Force Institute for National Security Studies, 2004), 73.

[9] Larry Diamond, "Iraq and Democracy: The Lessons Learned," *Current History* 105, no. 687 (2006): 38.

[10] Anthony Schwarz, "Iraq's Militias: The True Threat to Coalition Success in Iraq," *Parameters* (Spring 2007): 55-56, 57-58.

[11] Schwarz, 58.

[12] Hashim, 300.

'ultimate peace' in Iraq," and would have to be eliminated if the Iraqi government were to maintain control.[13]   Meanwhile, Middle East specialist Kenneth Katzman observed that "the ISF is not a true national force but rather a[n ineffective] carved-up conglomeration of militias."[14]   In September 2007, an independently commissioned report submitted to Congress by retired Marine Corps General James Jones called for the immediate dissolution of the Iraqi Police Service due to the conflicting loyalties of members of different militias that joined after the fall of Saddam.[15] That same month the U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) published Congressional Report GAO-07-1195 detailing the status of 18 benchmarks established by the U.S. government to measure legislative, economic and security progress in Iraq. Of the eighteen benchmarks, two pertained to the elimination of Shia militias.   Benchmark seven called for implementation of strong legislative policies for militia disarmament, while benchmark thirteen was designed to eliminate militia control of local security. Neither benchmark had been met. Additionally, benchmark twelve, which focused on the elimination of safe havens, was also considered a failure because the Sadr City area of Baghdad was functioning under the auspices of militia control. This benchmark also considered select government ministries operating under militia control as a failure. These benchmarks indicate that the basic approach of integration and defeat remains in place – and remains unsuccessful. The U.S. has also recognized the unwillingness of the Iraqi government to eliminate militias. In a Congressional Research Service Report written in November 2006 by Middle East Specialist Kenneth Katzman, the option of conducting a "coup" to remove the Maliki, who has been indifferent towards the existence of Shia militias, was listed as a possible strategy to eliminate Shia militias. This seemed to confirm the fears

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13 Jones, 302.

14 "Shiite Militias and Iraq's Security Forces," in Council on Foreign Relations [database online]. New York, NY November 30, 2005 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.cfr.org/publication/9316/shiite_militias_and_iraqs_security_forces.html (accessed February 21, 2007).

15 James L. Jones, *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies : Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, 2007), 152.

of many Iraqis that the "United States might try to use its influence among Iraqis to force Maliki to resign and replace him with a military strongman or some other figure that would crack down on sectarian militias."[16]

B.   HYPOTHESIS

This policy failure flows from the flawed understanding of the militias in academic and policymaking circles. Conventional wisdom regarding the imperative to eliminate militias in Iraq rests upon the correct observation that the state is locked in a struggle over the legitimate use of force, and therefore over power and authority, with the militias, but fails to appreciate that the militia may have more popular legitimacy than the state.[17] Recognizing this calls for a reconsideration of policy responses to the militia phenomenon. This thesis will argue that while military defeat is tactically feasible, it is unlikely to lead to strategic success because the militias have established popular legitimacy and military attacks by an occupying power are only likely to increase it. For similar reasons, engagement of the militia is likely to be more efficacious. Militias have demonstrated an ability to protect their neighborhoods and provide basic services and this mutual dependence is unlikely to be overcome in the short term. Therefore a U.S. policy of accommodation is likely to increase the likelihood of military success and political stability.[18]

In much of the developing world weak states cannot consistently make and implement the authoritative rules of the game for society. State leaders' efforts to do so are contested by local strongmen, who offer people alternative "strategies of survival." Strongmen and state leaders engage in a struggle for power, or to decide who will make the rules for society. Although state leaders and local strongmen are fundamentally

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[16] Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2004), 47.

[17] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and The International System* (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995), 216.; Joel S. Midgal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 296.; Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing The State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 390.

[18] This is not a fundamental shift in U.S. policy. Strategies of engagement are used with the Kurdish Peshmerga in Northern Iraq and with Sunni Militias in Western Iraq.

locked in a battle for control, they very often become mutually interdependent. Local strongmen need state resources to maintain their own support bases, but state leaders need support from the local strongmen if their policies are to be implemented. Thus those in the strongest position to challenge the state's authority are often also close allies of state authorities.[19] Maliki is dependent on the strongmen who lead Shia militias because of the sway they hold over the population. The struggles of strongmen that use militias to gain greater authority in Iraq raise several questions. What exactly is a militia? How do militias offer people the elements of a strategy of survival that is more attractive than what the state can offer and thus establish popular support, compliance and even legitimacy? Who are their constituents, and what are their motives?

Shia militias in Iraq are "quasi-official paramilitary units formed … by forces loosely allied to the government."[20] They are "small, homegrown, paramilitary-style brigades being formed by local tribes, religious leaders and political parties," which provide security to the local populace. [21] "[S]ome battle Iraq's largely Sunni insurgency alongside official Interior and Defense ministry troops; others operate without official assistance or sanction."[22] Militias have earned acceptance and legitimacy through

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[19] Migdal, 296.

[20] Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 299. Bradley Tatar, "Emergence of Nationalist Identity in Armed Insurrections: A Comparison of Iraq and Nicaragua," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2005): 179; citing Lenin on 181. Charles Tilly, "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists," *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 1, Theories of Terrorism: A Symposium (2004): 11; Charles Tilly, "Terror as a Strategy and Relational Process," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46 (April-May 2005): 25. The *Encarta Dictionary* gives three, defining militias as "soldiers who are civilians; an army of soldiers who are civilians but take military training and can serve full time during emergencies," and as a "reserve military force; a reserve army that is not part of the regular armed forces but that can be called up in an emergency." The third definition is most relevant: "unauthorized quasi military group; an unauthorized group of people who arm themselves and conduct quasi-military training." Other definitions of the term militia include Tartar defining militias as "a fighting force that has no loyalty to a state, in contrast to armies or police, which are controlled by a government," adding that V. I. Lenin had defined a civilian militia as a "self-acting, armed organization of the population." Tilly calls them "anti-governmental [groups that] maintain enduring organizations of coercive specialists and exercise terror within their base territories."

[21] "Iraq: Militia Groups," in Council on Foreign Relations [database online]. Washington D.C. June 9, 2005 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.cfr.org/publication/8175/. In the view of this thesis, legitimacy from Iraq's government is the primary causal factor that makes militias the most powerful force in Iraq. Why should a militia disarm and dissolve if they are officially or unofficially recognized by the ruling political party, especially since it is possible that disarming might create more negative long term consequences?

[22] "Iraq: Militia Groups.

defense of local families, tribes, and clans that have historically been victims of discrimination and persecution in Iraq. This makes them fundamentally different from insurgencies and criminal organizations. After the invasion in 2003 U.S. military units were incapable of establishing a presence everywhere, and Shia militias were employed to "organize security, suppress looting and restore basic services."[23] They emerged at a time when the local populace lacked state services and established regional peace and stability by negotiating with representative at the provincial level responsible for implementing state rule. [24] This led to accommodation between the militias and those charged with implementing state policy.[25] Not only do militias provide a level of social stability, economic support to the community, and security for local neighborhoods, they also provide incentives for the local population to join the militia, thus cementing their position in Shia society. According to Crenshaw, "incentives [include] a variety of individual needs: to belong to a group, to acquire social status, and reputation, to find comradeship or excitement, or to gain material benefits."[26]

Thus, militias aspire to regional political autonomy in order to acquire national power. Unlike criminals and insurgents, militias mobilize the local populace through tribal, family, and religious ties that were developed over generations, through their acceptance as a quasi-official group that is loosely allied with the state and their ability to serve as protectors of the local population when battling an occupation force. They are imbued with a certain level of legitimacy both by the people and by the current

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[23] "Behind Iraq's Moqtada Intifada," in Time Incorporated [database online]. New York, New York April 5, 2004 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,608113,00.html (accessed March 5, 2007).

[24] Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?* 1sted. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 127, 133, 135. Historically they have served an important purpose of defense against internal threats and external threats. Internal threats include the Baath party that systematically marginalized the Shia population through executions, imprisonment, torture, and censorship of fundamental religious ideology. During the late 1980's the Shia militia's prevented government forces from entering the Shia slum of Sadr City (formerly known as Saddam City) which facilitated the idea of opposition towards the minority-ruling Baath party. Shia militias have also served as protection from external threats such as the Iranians during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and as far back as the colonial occupation of the British in the 1920s.

[25] Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in The Third World,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 88-92.

[26] Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context,* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 19.

government in Iraq. Their popular legitimacy has three bases. First obligations derived from customs, values, and organization of the tribal system. This system is what dominates daily life. Loyalty to the "family and tribe is what dominates Iraq's social and political life."[27] This facilitates the second element of legitimacy: the ability to provide security and basic services to the population at a local level.[28] These elements are reinforced by external threats, especially those emanating from a military occupation. This has obvious implications for the U.S. military's "one size fits all" counterinsurgency policy.[29]

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[27] Richard H. Shultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 203. Militias are comprised of families and tribes who have greater influence on defining legitimacy in Iraqi society.   The tribe "signifies an ensemble of individuals and groups speaking the same language and dialect, split into multiple sub-groups" that consist of clans, sub-clans and families. Intertwined in the tribal system in Iraq consists of the Arab culture and Islamic religions that serves as the glue which has produced one of the world's most fascinating civilizations. From these tribes in the Iraqi Shia community is where the militia evolved.

[28] "Shiites Want the Help of Sadr's Militia," in Los Angeles Times [database online]. Los Angeles March 13, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://fairuse.100webcustomers.com/fairenough/latimes888.html.; "Shiite Militias May be Tougher to Overcome," in USA Today [database online]. New York September 7, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-09-06-iraqmilitia_N.htm. For example, The Los Angeles Times reported in March of 2007 that many residents demanded that the Mahdi Militia to return to the street after being instructed to stand down in previous weeks. Many Shia residents of Baghdad shared the same sentiment as Abu Fatima Sadi who said, "When the al Mahdi army was providing protection, there were no violations." USA Today reporters Oren Dorrell and Jim Michaels stated that "unlike al-Qaeda, which alienated people with its strict interpretation of Islam and intimidation of locals, militias became popular in some neighborhoods by offering Shiites protection Iraqi security forces couldn't provide, particularly during intense sectarian fighting last year." After a recent car bomb that exploded in a busy Shia neighborhood, a junior Army officer observed how militia members were the first to move into a partially collapsed building and risk their own lives to rescue the injured and extract the dead. "They were saving lives", stated the U.S. Army platoon leader. Only recently has a minority of senior military officials publicly legitimized their existence. U.S. Army Colonel Rich Welch, a tribal specialist and senior military advisor for the U.S. Army Third Infantry Division compares them with historical American militia forces. "There a little bit like the Minutemen were for us in the Revolutionary War. They get a call to arms and they are made up of regular citizens."

[29] Bradley Tatar, "Emergence of Nationalist Identity in Armed Insurrections: A Comparison of Iraq and Nicaragua," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2005): 185. Tartar provides a telling comparison between the task organization of a 1978-1979 Nicaraguan insurrection and the militia uprising that began in Iraq in 2003. A Nicaraguan militia commander leader explained the basic organization of a local militia in order to demonstrate the effectiveness and importance of their proliferation at the local level. This basic understanding of militia design helps reinforce the need for state and military organizations negotiate with the local strongmen (militia leaders) relationship between the militia leadership and the rank-and-file population today in Iraq: "You form your combat squadrons with the people who are the most experienced and the most trustworthy. They, in turn form militia groups. Normally, someone from the combat squadrons is the boss of a militia group…This was done by neighborhood. For example, in one neighborhood you had ten combat squadrons, and you had ten militia squadrons. Ten armed [squadrons] squadrons, not all of them armed, but yes, all had military training. The militias did not have training. That's how people are brought into combat. A lot of young people, a lot of workers join up for combat. The elderly, women, they perform other tasks."

In practice, the U.S. has extensive experience with engaging militias in Iraq. It has long cooperated with Kurdish militias, such as the Peshmerga, which are supportive of both the Coalition presence and the Iraqi government. More significantly perhaps, the U.S. has also engaged Sunni militias since September 2006, when the Sunni militias broke ties with Al Qaeda and joined forces with the U.S. to defeat it. A revised policy with respect to the Shia militias could build upon this experience. The most significant difference among the militias in the three areas of Iraq is simply the structure of their political alliances. The Kurdish militias have worked closely with the U.S. and the Iraqi government, while the Sunni militias have worked increasing closely with the U.S. while maintaining their distance from the Shia-dominated government, and the Shia militias have cooperated more closely with the Iraqi government than with the United States. As a result, Shia militia tend to be perceived as "extremist," while Kurdish and Sunni militia are perceived as allies, if only allies of convenience in the latter case. For example, Walter Slocombe, former Director of Security Affairs for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), states:

> Shia extremists, centered around Moqtada al-Sadr, have stood ready to challenge the moderate Shia leadership and periodically, carry out violent attacks on Coalition personnel…this groups seeks to mobilize Shia resentment, to displace the traditional leadership and any possibility of power sharing or respect for minority rights. The critical determinant will not be the immediate tactical success of the Coalition forces in fighting Sadr's militia, but the willingness and ability of the established Shia leadership to maintain its position and stand up to the extremists….They must be defeated if political and social objectives are to be attained.[30]

The question begs itself: Is everyone affiliated with a Shia militia an extremist? Implying that Shia militias are by definition extremists risks alienating the large portion of the Shia population that sees militias as a source of security, governance, and local support. Even when militias are "extremist," many in the Shia population can be

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[30] W. B. Slocombe, "Iraq's Special Challenge: Security Sector Reform 'Under Fire,'" *Bryden and Hänggi* (2004): 7-8.

expected to support them, actively or passively, so long as they provide defense for Shia Iraqis from further prosecution from Sunni insurgents, former regime elements and Baath party members.[31]

Politics as defined by Bard O'Neil is the "process of making and executing binding decisions for society."[32] Understanding the *political* importance of militia objectives in a weak state that is occupied by a foreign military force will contribute to identifying feasible policy responses to them in the search for long term peace. Militias embroil themselves in protracted low-level conflict because they believe they can achieve a successful *political* outcome. Galula states that "all wars are theoretically fought for a political purpose."[33] Why do these militia's focus primarily on the political outcome? It gives the militia the advantage to compete with a larger conventional military force that is designed to defeat an inferior opponent. It will also give them a regional advantage with maintaining control long after the occupying force have disappeared and when survivability of the group becomes an important factor. Whoever controls the population will win the struggle.[34] This has been true of the Mahdi Militias' objectives since the inception of U.S. forces in Iraq. Although their means of achieving victory have changed since 2003, the drive for political power has remained the same.[35] The nature of the militia's political agenda bestows upon them a strategic advantage against an occupation force. Unlike an insurgency, a militia has the best of both worlds. They are replete with support of the local populace whereas an insurgency might have to choose between

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[31] Shultz and Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat,* 239. Passive support by the general population is more common. It allows for the continued execution of extremist activities without direct involvement. For example, if an extremist group is the only group providing security to a particular neighborhood but enforcing other rules unacceptable by the state, then the local population is less inclined to make changes since it will further jeopardize their family's security. Active support involves activities such as providing financial assets, training, manpower, technical expertise, weapons, materiel, medical, food, etc. in order to positively influence their success.

[32] Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse,* 2nd , revised ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2005), 15.

[33] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice,* 4.

[34] Galula, 4-5.

[35] "Why Iraq Hangs in the Balance," in Time Incorporated [database online]. New York, New York April 7, 2004 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,608946,00.html.; "Behind Iraq's Moqtada Intifada," in Time Incorporated [database online]. New York, New York April 5, 2004 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,608113,00.html (accessed March 5, 2007).

consensus and coercion. Even if the population does not support them politically, they "may still support them materially in exchange for the security that militias offer."[36] The need for a protracted conflict also benefits the militia in terms of expense, flexibility, competing ideologies, and propaganda when competing with a large force.[37] Given the specific nature of militias, is a military strategy of defeat or engagement more likely to succeed in establishing security and stability? The remainder of this thesis seeks to answer this question.

C.   METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The thesis will use two case studies to investigate which policy might work best for Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction operations in Iraq. A comparison is adopted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of defeat and engagement as alternative military strategies employ by an occupying power vis-à-vis indigenous militia forces in the Middle East. The first case study is the United States occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2007. Chapter two analyzes the U.S. engagement strategies vis-à-vis the Kurdish Peshmerga in Northern Iraq since 2003, the defeat (2003-2006) and engagement (2006-2007) strategies vis-à-vis the Sunni militias in western and central Iraq, and lastly, and the defeat strategies vis-à-vis the Shia militias in Baghdad and Southern Iraq. The second case study is the British occupation of Palestine from 1920 to 1948. Chapter three analyzes British strategies of passive acceptance (1930-1936), engagement (1936-1945) and defeat (1945-1948) vis-à-vis Jewish militias in Palestine. Unlike Iraq, Palestine was not invaded by a foreign military to remove its leader. Palestine was recognized as a British Trusteeship by the League of Nations after World War I, and British policy supported the World Zionist Organization's goal of a Jewish state in Palestine. Thus, the occupation forces initially faced a more permissive environment in Palestine. However, in the years after 1936, the situation in Palestine came to resemble the current situation in Iraq in a number of important ways. The Arab Palestinian insurgency against the

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[36] "Iraq as a Militia War," in The Washington Institute for Near East Policy [database online]. Washington D.C. January 12, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2551 (accessed March 5, 2007).

[37] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice,* 6-10.

politically dominant Jewish community and the British occupation force presented many of the same challenges the U.S. has faced in Iraq. For the Jewish community of Palestine, as for the Shia community of Iraq, local security became an overriding concern, and local security came quickly to depend upon local Jewish militia forces as it became clear that the occupying military force was unable to provide security in the face of a growing Arab insurgency. While the failure to provide a political solution that served the interests of the Palestinians as well as the Jews created a situation of permanent conflict in the greater Middle East region, the British occupation nevertheless left a strong state in its wake. As Chapter III will show, this outcome had much to do with its military strategies vis-à-vis the militias. The extent to which the lessons of the Palestine cases can be applied to the current situation in Iraq will be considered in Chapter IV. The Palestine case study will rely primarily upon the abundant secondary sources, while the Iraq case study will rely largely on primary sources.

# II.   CASE STUDY- OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

A.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine three different strategies employed by U.S. military forces to deal with militias in Iraq since 2003, arguing that strategies of engagement have consistently been more effective than strategies of defeat. As background, the first section describes the five phases of the United States invasion and occupation of Iraq between 2003 and 2007: the invasion, evolution of insurgency, transfer of political authority, sectarian violence, and surge of U.S. forces. The rest of chapter is divided into three, addressing U.S. strategies vis-à-vis militias in the majority Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia regions of Iraq, respectively. The Kurdish section examines the U.S. Special Forces strategy of engagement with the Kurdish Peshmerga during the invasion of Iraq and during post conflict operations. The analysis highlights the Special Forces perceived need to engage and cooperate with the Peshmerga in order to survive and ultimately succeed in defeating Saddam Hussein's military. The analysis will also examine the emergency direct employment of Kurdish militias during the post-invasion phase and their effect on security and stability when the majority of Iraq was mired in chaos. The third section provides a comparative analysis of two different strategies vis-à-vis militias in Sunni dominated Anbar province. From 2003 to 2006, the U.S. battled insurgents and Al Qaeda in Anbar province, and insecurity remained high. In mid-2006 a U.S. Army Brigade Commander reversed course, initiating a strategy of engagement with Sunni militias, ultimately endorsing their use for providing local security against al Qaeda threats, with the consequence of dramatically reduced levels of violence in the province. The last section examines U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Shia militias, focusing on the effects of the strategy of non-engagement with Moqtada al Sadr and his Mahdi Militia throughout the period under consideration. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of the effects on local stability of U.S. militia strategies in the three regions.

B. BACKGROUND

Since 2003 the U.S. occupation of Iraq has taken a number of twists and turns, which has caused the U.S. military to react to situations on the ground rather than pursuing its intended mission of transitioning control to a democratically led Iraqi government. The offensive strategy of preemptive strikes began on March 19, 2003 after a 48 hour deadline for Saddam Hussein to leave the country had passed. By the next day, the U.S. campaign of "shock and awe" had devastated key infrastructure throughout the country and in Baghdad in particular. Three weeks later Saddam's government dissolved and the U.S. policy of "regime change," in place since 1991, was finally achieved. Ironically, the Bush administration, which had criticized the "Clintonian policy of nation-building in far-off places with unpronounceable names," placed little emphasis on planning for the post-conflict reconstruction and security that would be needed to achieve success after the Baath party had fallen.[38] On May 1, 2003 President Bush declared an end to combat operations. Even though it was the end of the invasion, it was the beginning of an unconventional war, for which the military was not prepared. Unlike previous unconventional campaigns such as Vietnam, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, the number of non-state actors staking a claim in Iraq's future was immense. The United States military was faced with a growing insurgency campaign about which it understood very little. Since most military commanders deployed to Iraq with the idea of conducting conventional combat operations, the military also gave little thought to post-conflict reconstruction and the civil-military operations that would be central to it.

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[38] Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, Or Division?* 1st ed. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 99-100, 185, http://www.loc.gov/catdir/bios/hol053/2003058846.html (accessed July 23, 2007).
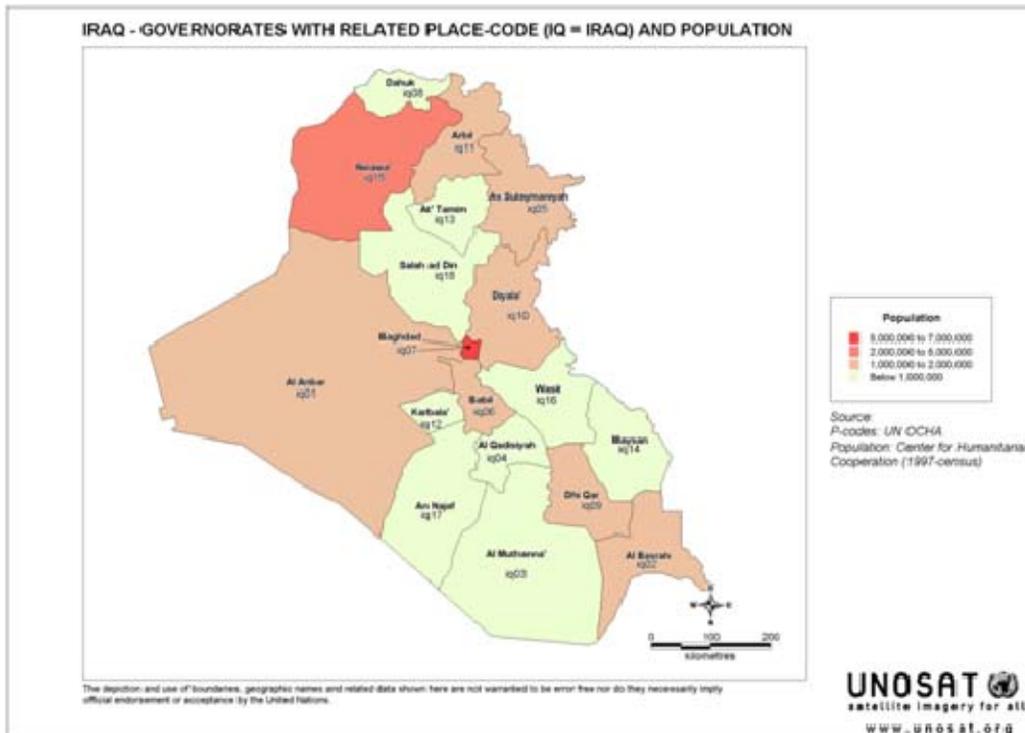
Figure 1.   Provincial Map of Iraq[39]

The lack of focus on post-conflict operations was evident in the under-funded and under-equipped Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), led by retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner, which was established to "manage postwar reconstruction, governance, and assistance in Iraq."[40]   Created and funded by the Department of Defense in January 2003, ORHA was composed of Iraqi exiles and opponents of the Saddam Hussein regime. It was intended to "re-establish law and order, basic services and some form of governance."[41] The tactical military strategy was to pass the torch of responsibility to civilian agencies that specialized in post-conflict operations, including OHRA and a newly elected Iraqi government. Major General David Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne division who was responsible for most of Northern Iraq

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[39] John Pike, "Global Security.Org Maps of Iraq," Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/maps.htm (accessed January 4, 2008).

[40] Kirsten Lundberg, *The Accidental Statesmen: General Petraeus and the City of Mosul, Iraq* (Cambridge, MA: Case Program, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University,[2006]).

[41] Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 292.

stated that he "had a sense that ORHA, working together with Iraqi exiles and Iraqis who would be on the job, would probably take the lead" and that the U.S. military would assume more of a supporting role.[42]   However ORHA was able to accomplish little more than damage assessments as large areas of Iraq plummeted into chaos. ORHA had not prepared for the scenario that was playing out in Iraq and thus had no contingency plans ready to deal with such widespread looting, vandalism, and organized crime. The 600-800 ORHA staff stationed in Baghdad was driven by competing political agendas, which led to sub par work and refusal to remove themselves from Saddam's palaces and communicate with the local population.   ORHA's "planning was ragged and execution was worse."[43]   Personnel limitations and location also were a problem. The ORHA North office was staffed by only ten personnel safely located in Irbil, in the Kurdish zone, which was too far away from other northern Iraqi cities such as Mosul, where reconstruction assistance was desperately needed.[44]   ORHA's shortcomings were not all of its own making. It had less than three months from its inception to plan and prepare for post-conflict nation-building whereas planning for post-conflict administration after World War II took two and a half years.[45]   In July 2003, ORHA was replaced with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) led by L. Paul Bremer, which was designed to "exercise executive, legislative, and judicial powers while rebuilding the state's infrastructure and beginning the job of reconstruction."[46]   On July 13, 2003, the CPA established the Interim Governing Council, an appointed body of Iraqis that was to "consult and advise [Bremer] on all matters relating to the temporary governance of Iraq."[47]   However, by then reservations in Sunni and Shia communities about U.S. employment of what appeared to be a combat-oriented strategy in response to ORHA failures had begun to foment.

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[42] Lundberg, *The Accidental Statesmen: General Petraeus and the City of Mosul, Iraq*, 7.

[43] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 294-295.

[44] Lundberg, *The Accidental Statesmen: General Petraeus and the City of Mosul, Iraq*, 8.

[45] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 294.

[46] Hashim, 18.

[47] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 18.
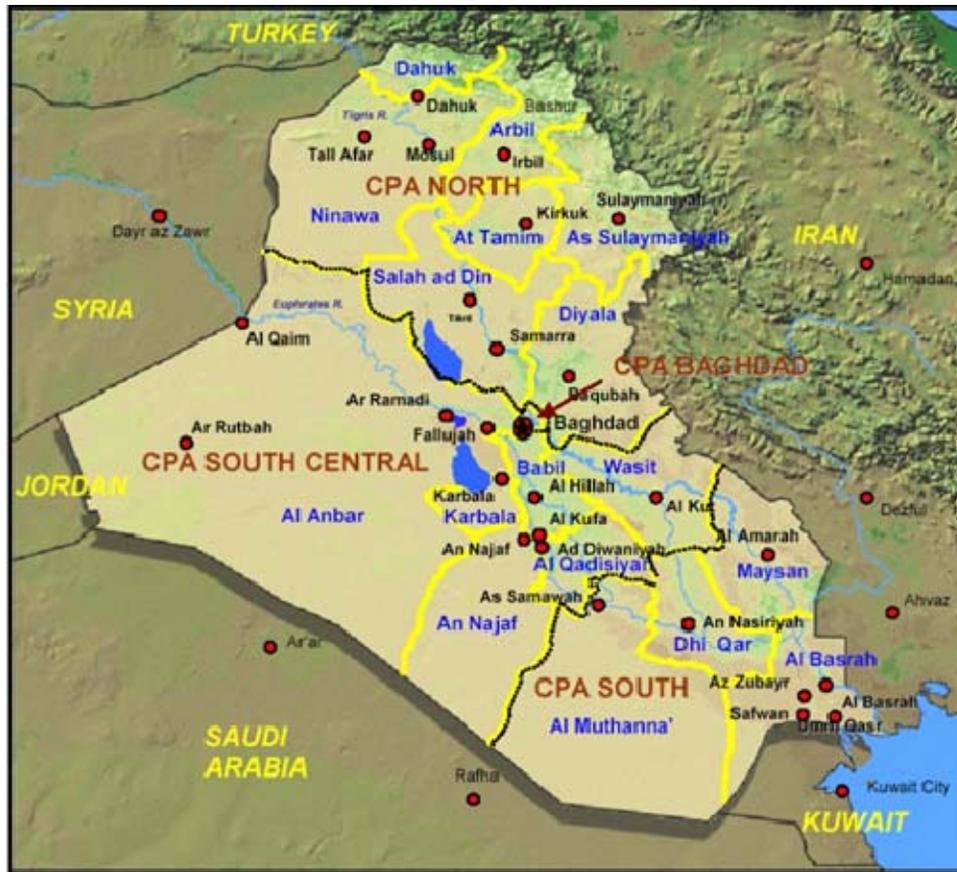
Figure 2.   Coalition Provisional Authority Boundaries[48]

After insurgents bombed United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003 killing Sergio Vieira de Mello, one the best stabilization and reconstruction officials in the United Nations, the success of the initial invasion quickly gave way to a brewing Sunni insurgency and organized resistance by Shia militias.[49] Many in the Sunni and Shia communities, initially slow to react as they waited to see whether U.S. forces would be liberators or occupiers, had decided by late 2003 to support the insurgency because of disappointment with the way the U.S. military treated Iraqi civilians, its inability to maintain order after the collapse of the Baath regime, the lack of economic improvement after the initial collapse caused by the invasion, the dissolution of the Iraqi Army, and the

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[48] John Pike, "Global Security.Org Maps of Iraq," Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/maps.htm (accessed January 4, 2008).

[49] Larry Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 5 (2004), 8.

U.S. inability to restore basic services.[50] The Kurdish community in Northeast Iraq went the other way, maintaining a positive view of the Coalition, which supported its continued autonomy, and had eliminated the threat of the Baath party in the Kurdish north. The number of military operations increased as the insurgency grew and U.S. casualties mounted. Hope that Saddam Hussein's capture on December 13, 2003 would see an end to insurgent violence was quickly dashed, as simultaneous uprisings occurred throughout the country at the beginning of 2004.

By spring 2004, the U.S. military had already experienced a bloody year in Iraq. Untrained and under-equipped Iraqi security forces failed to maintain security and sometimes encouraged insecurity, civilians working with coalition forces faced mass kidnappings and assassinations, and the U.S. military was confronted with graphic depictions of soldiers abusing prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison. Additionally, the CPA was unable to fulfill demands for basic services, the Iraqi political process was encumbered with dissension, and the U.S. was no longer viewed as a liberator by Iraqi citizens. April 2004 witnessed the Shia uprising led by Moqtada al-Sadr against U.S. and Iraqi security forces in Shia cities such as Kufa, Nasiriyah, Basra, and Sadr City. During the same month, four private American contractors were murdered and horrifically mutilated in Fallujah, near the headquarters of the American-backed Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. By the summer of 2004 the U.S. goal of creating a secular democracy had been replaced with an urgent need to avoid what Anthony Cordesman labeled a "serious strategic defeat."[51]   In an effort to demonstrate Iraqi control, the CPA transferred authority to an interim Iraqi government under the control of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a leader appointed by the Coalition on June 28, 2004. The second half of 2004 witnessed gradual a shift in insurgent and extremist tactics of strictly focusing their attacks on Coalition forces towards attacking supporters of the transitional government.[52] Major military offensives began in September 2004 in Tal Afar (near Mosul), Samarra (north of Baghdad) and the Babil province south of Baghdad. By November 8, 2004 the

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[50] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 27-33.

[51] Hashim, 35-36, 37, 38.

[52] Hashim, 35-46.

U.S. military had launched one of the largest military offensives since the beginning of the invasion. By December, the Coalition announced that over 15,000 insurgents had been killed or captured, while thousands of Iraqi security forces fighting alongside Coalition forces had also been killed or captured.[53] However, many of the insurgent groups that emerged in 2004 led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, now turned to sectarian attacks against the Shia community in an attempt to exacerbate instability. The U.S. was able to manage the chaos long enough to allow elections to go forward at the beginning of 2005.

The national elections, conducted on January 30, 2005, were intended to choose an interim government that would then draft a permanent constitution. Sunni insurgent groups issued warnings to the populace not to participate, in hopes of undermining the legitimacy of the process. This strategy backfired. The Shia, who comprise sixty percent of the population, and the Kurds, who comprise seventeen percent, turned out in large numbers. The Sunni, who comprises twenty percent of the population, did not participate in the election for two reasons. First they felt that an election would lead to their marginalization by the majority Shia, and second the rejected the legitimacy of the U.S.-backed process. Shia political parties such as Dawa, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), and Moqtada al-Sadr's United Iraqi Coalition collectively garnered a large percentage of the vote. The Kurds were also successful, winning the second-largest percentage of the vote next to the Shia majority. Most Iraqis had hoped the elections would lead to a respite from the escalating violence.[54] However, sectarian divisions were further aggravated by a number of suicide bombings and terror attacks against the Shia population during the annual Ahura religious celebration in February.[55] By April 2005, the political process had slowed due to political wrangling and the inability to compromise between elected Sunni and Shia officials. Attacks using vehicle

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[53] Jabbar Karam, *Post-Transition Violence in Iraq (2004-2005) the Military Perspective of an Insider* (Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA: The U.S. Army War College, 2006), 3-4, http://stinet.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA449650&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf (accessed November 9, 2007). During the month of October 2004, Allawi's interim government, the Coalition, and the Mahdi militia were able to negotiate a settlement to stop the fighting in Sadr City.

[54] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 48-49.

[55] Hashim, 49.

and human borne improvised explosive devices had risen to unprecedented levels following the announcement of the new government on April 28, 2005.[56] Sunni insurgents, led by Zarqawi, continued to target both Coalition forces and Shia communities. However, many senior Shia leaders showed restraint. Adel Abdel-Mahdi, a senior SCIRI leader, insisted: "We are not going to raise our arms because we are attacked or because Zarqawi and others want to push us into civil war."[57] Instead, Shia militias sought to secure their neighborhoods from rising attacks. However, the rise of the radical militants like Zarqawi and the military occupation helped promote a form of Shia extremism that was new to Iraq. Certain elements of the Shia population became disenfranchised with U.S. promises of security, stability, improved economic conditions. This was then exacerbated by radical religious leaders promoting a theocratic Iranian style of rule.[58] By 2006, Shia extremism was influenced more by sectarian attacks. For example the destruction of al-Askari Mosque, the most revered Shia Shrine in Samarra on February 22, 2006 by Sunni insurgent is largely accepted as the point when Shia extremism was widely reflected by mass sectarian attacks against the Sunni population in retaliation for the bombing.[59] After the bombing the ranks of Shia militias became diluted with people who joined with the sole intent of killing Sunnis for revenge. The rise in extremists infiltrating and influencing militias can be attributed to the rise in sectarian attacks whereas before militias were more inclined to remain on the defensive. This rise in extremist infiltration also had an impact on Sadr's ability to control his militias, culminating in his August 2007 call for a nationwide "six month freeze in hostilities to rein in lawless elements."[60]

By the summer of 2005, U.S. military emphasis had been placed on stifling the Sunni insurgency and limiting civilian attacks against Shia communities in hopes of

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[56] Karam, *Post-Transition Violence in Iraq (2004-2005) the Military Perspective of an Insider*, 4

[57] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 49.

[58] Hannah Allam, "Extremism Sweeping Iraq among Sunni, Shiite Muslims Alike," Knight Ridder, http://www.commondreams.org/headlines04/0615-06.htm (accessed December 9, 2007).

[59] Thomas Mowle, "Iraq's Militia Problem," *Survival* 48, no. 3 (2006), 1.

[60] Ned Parker, "Sadr Militia Moves to Clean House," LA Times, http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-sadr7dec07,0,4006041.story?coll=la-headlines-world (accessed December 7, 2007).

preventing an all out civil war. Operation Matador, conducted in mid-May in western Iraq, targeted "suspected insurgent supply routes of volunteers and materiel from Syria."[61] In the context of sustained military operations, a referendum on the new Iraqi constitution was conducted and achieved the necessary two-thirds vote for approval, despite the fact that Sunnis concentrated in two major provinces (al Anbar and Saddam Hussein's birthplace of Salah al Din) voted against it. Although 2005 closed on a promising note with national assembly elections being held in December, there was an increase of 7,640 incidents recorded against coalition forces and civilian personnel during the year compared to 2004.[62]

In 2006 the nascent Iraqi government struggled to establish its authority in the face of increasing, and increasingly complex, violence. Sectarian conflict between Sunni insurgents and Shia extremists continued, and violent criminal gangs operated freely, while Iraqi and U.S. security forces actively attempted to suppress both. On February 22, 2006, al Qaeda operatives bombed one of the most revered Shia mosques in Iraq. This sparked Shia extremists to form death squads that led to mass retaliatory executions of Sunni Arabs, including innocent civilians and religious leaders.[63] Meanwhile, the U.S. military strategy was designed to reduce its footprint by placing greater emphasis on the Iraqi military and police. This led to the build-up of massive Forward Operating Bases (FOB), in which a majority of the coalition forces was isolated from the community. Instead of immersing themselves in their areas of operation, combat units were sometimes required to travel long distances to and from a FOB, increasing their isolation and reducing their ability to understand what was going on around them. With the rise in Sunni attacks on the Shia, a lack of confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces and lack of visibility of coalition forces, Shia neighborhoods were increasing reliant upon the militias for security. However, after the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in February Shia

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[61] Karam, *Post-Transition Violence in Iraq (2004-2005) the Military Perspective of an Insider*, 4.

[62] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 414.

[63] Mowle, *Iraq's Militia Problem*, 1.

militias had shifted almost completely from providing local security to the creation of Shia death squads that targeted the Sunni population. Shia communities were thus left with little or no security.

The National Unity Government led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki took shape on May 20 in the context of increasing sectarian violence and a young Iraqi security force divided along ethnic lines.[64] It was no secret that two of Maliki's biggest supporters were Moqtada al Sadr, leader of the Mahdi militia, and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Badr militia. During the fall of 2006, sectarian violence reached its pinnacle. According to the *Foreign Policy*'s Failed State Index Ranking, Iraq ranked fourth behind the Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Ivory Coast, respectively.[65] The death of Zarqawi on June 7th and the execution of Saddam Hussein on Dec 30, 2006 (after a highly publicized trial), did nothing to reduce sectarian tensions.[66] "By the end 2006, Iraqis were dying at the rate of at least 3,000 per month. Americans were being killed at the rate of nearly 100 per month."[67] Approximately 1.8 million people had fled the country while 1.6 million had been internally displaced from their homes by end of 2006.[68]

Nevertheless, concerted efforts were being made by many Sunnis and Shias, as well as Coalition forces, to reduce sectarian violence. At the same time, the U.S. government was reconsidering its Iraq strategy. The White House commissioned a non-partisan Iraq Study Group to chart the way forward. Former President George H.W. Bush took a more direct role in the stabilization of Iraq, meeting directly with Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, one of the most powerful Shia leaders in Iraq who controls SCIRI and the Badr

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[64] Tony Blair, "Joint Statement by Tony Blair and Nouri Al-Maliki," Her Majesty's Stationary Office, http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page9507.asp2007) (accessed November 7, 2007).

[65] "Sudan Tops 'Failed States Index'," British Broadcasting Corporation, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4964444.stm2007 (accessed November 7, 2007).

[66] Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, "Insurgent Leader Al-Zarqawi Killed in Iraq," The Washington Post, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060800114.html2007) (accessed November 7, 2007).

[67] Pauline Baker, *Lessons Learned from Iraq: Where do we Go from here? 2003-2006* (Washington, D.C.: Fund For Peace,[2006]).

[68] Baker, 4.

militia.[69]   Current President Bush also signaled a change in strategy by replacing his increasingly controversial Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld with the moderate Robert Gates on December 18, 2006, and General George Casey with General David Petraeus on February 10, 2007. Sheiks in Anbar province began negotiations with Coalition forces in August 2006, leading to an alliance that was made public at the beginning of 2007.[70]

The new year also brought a change of U.S. military strategy focusing around a surge in troops designed to create enough security for Iraqi government institutions to start functioning. General Petraeus went ahead with General Casey's request for 30,000 additional troops to be deployed to help quell sectarian violence. Gone were the days of consolidating troops in large FOBs. Instead they would be deployed throughout Iraq in numerous small combat outposts called Joint Security Stations (JSS), which would be integrated with Iraqi security forces and the population. Although the new military strategy has been under fire since its inception in January 2007, the surge has led to improved security at the local level. According to General Petraeus' report to Congress in September, attacks in the four major provinces- Salah ad Din, Baghdad, Anbar, and Ninewah saw a sharp decline in 2007.[71]   His report also indicated a willingness to continue to strengthen alliances with Sunni militias in order to defeat al Qaeda in Iraq. However there was no indication of a similar willingness to work with Shia militias, which could perform a similar role in assisting with identifying and defeating Shia extremists and death squads. The lack of engagement with Shia militias in 2007 has left violence again Coalition forces and violence between different militia groups seeking to establish control over territory unaddressed. If the recent improvements in security in Sunni dominated areas are attributable to the Coalition's engagement and empowering of militias to maintain local security, then such improvements are unlikely to be replicated in Shia areas under the current strategy, which would leave the U.S. hard pressed to

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[69] Aljazeera.net, "Bush Meets Iraqi Shia Leader," Al Jazeera, http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/639A15E7-470E-4A37-9F72-3DB19724A296.htm2007).

[70] Mark Kukis, "Turning Iraq's Tribes Against Al Qaeda," Time Incorporated, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1572796,00.html2007).

[71] David H. Petraeus, *Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq* (Iraq: Multi-National Force-Iraq [2007]).

reduce its overall footprint in Iraq in the near future. Is there such a direct link between strategies vis-à-vis militias and security and stability? The rest of this chapter will argue that there is.

1. U.S. Engagement of the Kurdish Peshmerga

The Kurdish area of northern Iraq could serve as a model for future stability throughout the country. The U.S. has consistently employed an engagement strategy with the Kurdish militia, known as the Peshmerga ("those who face death"). The region epitomizes a U.S. military strategy that encourages the engagement and use of local militias to augment and reinforce security responsibilities. Although the de facto autonomy of the Kurdish region in the 1990s allowed the Peshmerga to advance organizationally far beyond Shia militias (e.g., the Mahdi Militia founded in 2003), they clearly demonstrate that militias can be employed successfully to stabilize Iraq while reducing reliance on the U.S. military for local security.

Figure 3.   Area Controlled by the Peshmerga[72]

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[72] John Pike, "Global Security.Org Maps of Iraq," Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/maps.htm (accessed January 4, 2008).

Like other militias established in Iraq, the Kurdish Peshmerga was gradually developed by two competing tribes that would later form Kurdish political parties, while still maintaining their militias during their rise to power. Although it has existed in one form or another since the nineteenth century, the uprising against Saddam Hussein's military forces in the 1990s molded it into a more capable and disciplined force, which facilitated the positive relationship it has maintained with U.S. forces since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The evacuation of Saddam Hussein's government after 1991 forced (or allowed) the Kurdish region to create a pseudo-state, with something of a hybrid government based on tribal affiliations and a functioning western-style government, including an executive, legislative and judicial branch. However this did not occur without significant political and human tragedy. After Saddam Hussein was driven out of Kuwait by Coalition forces in 1991, the Kurdish Peshmerga was one of many popular militias to participate in an Iraqi uprising that took control of three-fourths of Iraqi Kurdistan, and 14 of 18 provinces across the country. After Shia militias were defeated, Iraqi military forces were able to focus on northern Iraq and quickly overwhelmed the lightly armed Peshmerga. Since the Peshmerga and other militias (that contributed in the uprising) had no international support, they were soon faced with severe food shortages that forced the withdrawal of their militias and negotiations between Kurdish leaders and Saddam Hussein.[73]A power struggle between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani ultimately led to civil war in 1994 over the security of revenue and the leadership of Kurdistan. A U.S. brokered peace agreement in 1998 led to the integration of the two political parties in order to strengthen their common position in the larger Iraqi context. Leaders also managed to integrate their militias, resulting in the 80,000 to 100,000 strong Peshmerga that has cooperated with the U.S. military since the invasion in 2003.[74]

The U.S. engagement strategy vis-a-vis the Peshmerga grew out of the tactical relationships that were established prior to the invasion in 2003. Since Turkey refused to

[73] Michael G. Lortz, "Willing to Face Death: A History of Kurdish Military Forces-the Peshmerga-from the Ottoman Empire to Present-Day Iraq" Florida State University), 59-60.

[74] Anderson and Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, Or Division?* 174, 177, 179.

allow the U.S. 4th Infantry Division to invade Iraq from its territory, a small contingent of special operations officers deployed to Kurdish areas and co-opted approximately 65,000 Kurdish Peshmerga forces to defeat "thirteen divisions of the Iraqi army – more than 100,000 soldiers – along a 350-kilometer front."[75]   This relationship also allowed U.S. forces to neutralize a well known insurgent group, Ansar al Islam, the notorious terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and al Qaeda in Kurdish dominated areas during the invasion phase of Operation Iraqi freedom. By adopting the culture, dress, tactics, techniques and procedures of the Peshmerga, Special Forces units were able to accomplish a mission against a much larger enemy and over an immense geographic area, working with local militias instead of employing massive numbers of U.S. soldiers (that were no longer available anyway). They also recognized that although the tactics of the Peshmerga differed from U.S. military tactics they were still very effective. Thus, they did not try to force the militia to conduct missions the way the U.S. military would. For example, the militia did not use body armor, wore running shoes, carried few heavy weapons and assaulted the enemy using a frontal attack (as opposed to typical guerilla attacks employed by small rebel units).[76]   The Special Forces engagement of the Kurdish Peshmerga was imperative to the initial success of the invasion and disruption of Ansar al-Islam in 2003. After forty-eight hours of intense fighting, Special Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga had killed over 300 insurgents and secured 300 square kilometers of northern Iraq. While the Special Forces operators did not suffer any casualties, the Kurdish Peshmerga suffered twenty-three wounded and three killed in action.[77]   The engagement strategy had the same effect when the outnumbered Special Forces units were faced with fighting the Iraqi Army. At the end of the day, the invasion of Iraq would not have been able to succeed without the engagement of the Kurdish Peshmerga. By the time the invasion was over, one Special Forces battalion along with 26,000

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[75] Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 388.

[76] Robinson, 299.

[77] Robinson, 323.

Kurdish militiamen were able to "capture Iraq's third-largest city, defeat six Iraqi divisions, capture 600 and killed 859 enemy soldiers, and seize 6,000 square kilometers of territory."[78]

As elsewhere in Iraq, Kurdish cities began to descend into chaos due to the security vacuum that was created by the defeat of the Iraqi Army. However, the Special Forces recognized the impending disaster and the Kurdish Peshmerga was the only security apparatus available able to suppress angry crowds and looters until they were able to hand over operational control to the 101st Airborne Division led by Major General Petraeus.[79] However, there was a brief period during which the 101st was unwilling to engage the Peshmerga, which showed how quickly an area not controlled by the Peshmerga could descend into chaos. Immediately after the 101st arrived into Northern Iraq, they began to limit Peshmerga authority by confiscating their weapons, which enabled insurgents and criminals to reorganize and recover from the recent success of the joint Peshmerga-SF operations. This was followed by the re-eviction of Kurdish families from their ancestral homes, which had been taken from them during Saddam's Arabization policy in the 1990's, and to which they had recently returned. Lastly, the U.S. endorsed the establishment of a Kurdish army battalion under the leadership of former Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi consisting of soldiers that did not participate in the successful joint Kurdish-SF battles against Iraqi Army units. This caused many of the loyal Kurdish militia members to abandon their Peshmerga units in an effort to benefit financially from salaries to be paid to the new battalion, leaving some militias in a significantly weakened state and unable to protect northern cities like Mosul against a growing insurgency. The army battalion, meanwhile, never amounted to a substantial force and was slowly dissolved into obscurity for two reasons. First, many of the soldiers were later arrested by U.S. forces after "they were found looting abandoned homes of former members of Saddam Hussein's regime," while they were still in uniform and when they were supposed to be supporting U.S. troops with security immediately after

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[78] [78] Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 340.

[79] Robinson, 340.

the fall the Baath party.[80] Second, less than a year after Chalabi was brought in by the White House and Pentagon as a contender for the post-invasion presidency of Iraq, he was abandoned by the U.S. due to accusations that he was "passing classified information to Iran and money laundering in Iraq."[81]The sudden change in U.S. strategy to non-engagement of the Kurdish militias resulted in an increasingly hostile population, and a weakened militia unable to combat a growing insurgency, which left U.S. forces fighting alone. Many U.S. soldiers who had been working with the Peshmerga were shocked. One captured the general sentiment: "The Kurds bled with us. They died in this war, for our cause. They are our comrades. They know this city. They know Mosul. Good God, they know all northern Iraq…our Commanding general gave them the boot."[82] The 101st soon recognized the need to modify its strategy because the Kurds "felt slighted that – despite their demonstrated loyalty to the coalition forces they had received only a minor allocation of reconstruction funds."[83] MG Petraeus soon reversed course, ensuring that the 101st would continue the strategy of engagement fostered by the Special Forces by augmenting the Peshmerga with "two engineer battalions to expand airfields, and help the Kurds train and equip border guards, train civil defense forces, rebuild schools, and complete various water projects."[84]

Engagement with the Peshmerga continued to serve as a coherent U.S. military strategy after the fall of Saddam, producing one of the few examples of stability during a chaotic period. Once installed, the interim Iraqi government also recognized the benefits of employing the Kurdish militias. They were immediately called upon to serve as border guards and fill major security voids on the Iraq-Iran border in August 2003. Additionally the U.S. would benefit by immediately employing the Kurdish militias to

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[80] "Chalabi Backers Arrested for Looting," Toronto Star, http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0423-06.htm (accessed December 9, 2007).

[81] Peyman Pejman, "Iraq: Chalabi Says U.S. Organization may be Behind Attacks," Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/09/d022f9bb-e515-4f17-a002-043357467345.html (accessed December 9, 2007).

[82] Richard Andres, "The Afghan Model in Northern Iraq," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June, 2006), 415-417 (accessed November 8, 2007).

[83] Lundberg, *The Accidental Statesmen: General Petraeus and the City of Mosul, Iraq*, 20

[84] Lundberg, 20.

protect the fragile oil infrastructure, which U.S. planners hoped to use to pay for reconstruction of the country. Furthermore, the U.S. used nearly 7,000 of the Peshmerga as interrogators, perimeter security guards, neighborhood patrolmen and soldiers to track down and destroy radical insurgent movements such as Ansar al Islam and al Qaeda, which were determined to destabilize Iraq through a campaign of violence and terror. The U.S. went as far as integrating members of the Peshmerga militia into U.S. Army training exercises that were conducted in the continental United States. Fort Irwin, California serves as a major training base where units validate their tactics, techniques, and procedures against an opposing force (OPFOR) intended to replicate situations in Iraq. Therefore the engagement of select members of Kurdish militia "adds to the realism" during training exercises.[85]

Given the heavy reliance upon and support of the Kurdish militia groups before, during and after the invasion of Iraq, it was somewhat quixotic that the CPA (the de facto U.S. government in Iraq) attempted to implement CPA Order 91 in June 2004, which suddenly made militias illegal. Instead of augmenting nascent government security forces by embracing the experienced Kurdish militias, the CPA decided to abolish all militias in the country. Like the 101st initial, poorly informed, effort to sideline the Peshmerga, this polarizing strategy of usurping control over proven security elements such as the Kurdish Peshmerga had the potential to undo everything the U.S. Special Forces had accomplished since January 2003. Fortunately for the U.S., Kurdish political leaders recognized the futility of disbanding their militia in favor of nonexistent state security force and chose to ignore the CPA Order.[86]

Since the implementation of CPA Order 91 in 2004 the U.S. strategy of trying to disband the Kurdish Peshmerga was officially abandoned after the approval of the constitution in 2005 in favor of a return to the strategy of engagement and quiet

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[85] Lortz, *Willing to Face Death: A History of Kurdish Military Forces-the Peshmerga-from the Ottoman Empire to Present-Day Iraq*, 69-70.

[86] Edward Wong, "Kurds Vow to Retain Militia as Guardians of Autonomy," New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/27/international/middleeast/27militia.html?pagewanted=all&position= (accessed February 27, 2007).

recognition.[87]   And the strategy has continued to serve the U.S. well. "[N]ot a single American soldier has been killed in Kurdistan since the start of the war in Iraq, and there hasn't been a major terrorist attack in Arbil since June 2005."[88]   The single most important factor in the Kurdish region maintaining the highest levels of stability in Iraq with the lowest number of U.S. troops has been the strategy of engaging militias. According to a poll conducted in early 2007, less than four percent of Kurds interviewed stated that they encountered any violence in Kurdistan compared to 41% of the population interviewed around the rest of Iraq. The integration of the Peshmerga into Iraqi security forces stationed in Kurdistan has also been well received by the civilian population.   For example, interviewees living in Iraqi Kurdistan were asked if they perceived unnecessary violence by U.S./Coalition forces, local militias, police, and the Army. U.S./Coalition forces received the least favorable response, with nine percent of respondents saying that they use unnecessary violence – a very low number by Iraqi standards. They were followed by local militia, with two percent, the Iraqi police with one percent, and the Iraqi Army with an unbelievable zero percent.[89]   According to a March 2007 Department of Defense report measuring stability in Iraq, the four provinces primarily controlled by the Kurdish Peshmerga, had the lowest levels of tension in the country. On a zero to 10 scale, tensions within neighborhoods in the region scored a two. This has also resulted in over 89% of the Kurdish population being satisfied with the local area in which they live. These Kurdish provinces were among the top four with the lowest levels of violence throughout Iraq when sampling the time period of November 2006 to February 2007.[90]   Clearly, the engagement strategy that the U.S. has utilized with

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[87] Edward Wong, "Kurds Vow to Retain Militia as Guardians of Autonomy," New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/27/international/middleeast/27militia.html?pagewanted=all&position= (accessed February 27, 2007).

[88] Andrew Lee Butters, "Where Iraq Works," Time, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1606880-2,00.html2007) (accessed November 15, 2007).

[89] Anthony Cordesman, *Iraq's Sectarian and Ethnic Violence and its Evolving Insurgency* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies,[April 2, 2007]) (accessed November 17, 2006).

[90] Cordesman.

the Kurdish Peshmerga since the invasion of Iraq has, at a minimum, contributed to higher levels of stability in the Kurdish provinces.

2.   From Defeat to Engagement: the U.S. Military and Sunni Militias

As with the Kurdish Peshmerga, Sunni militias were established along tribal lines. Sunni militias grew out of the historical experience of the Bedouin tribes, for whom "it was the duty of all able-bodied men to join kinship militias" in order to ensure the "protection and survival" of the local tribe.[91] However, after the invasion the Sunni population was much more skeptical about the future of Iraq than the Kurds, since the Sunnis had been the primary beneficiaries of Baath party largesse. The Sunni minority quickly became fearful that they would be marginalized by the Shia and Kurdish majority, which made them more susceptible to insurgent mobilization. Unlike Kurdish militias who were accepting of both the new Iraqi government and the Coalition, Sunni militias were skeptical of both the U.S.-led Coalition and the Shia-dominated Iraqi government. Because the U.S. knew that the Sunnis were distrustful and supported Saddam they were less inclined to try to work with them, or didn't think there was any possibility of shared interests. That would also have reinforced the Sunni perceptions of the U.S. as an enemy. However, the fact that Sunnis and their militias did not whole-heartedly accept the establishment of a government or the American occupation does not mean they were unwilling to negotiate. After the Iraqi Army was removed from Kuwait in 1991, Saddam lost control of 14 of 18 provinces. He reestablished control of the provinces by "subcontracting security to tribal chiefs who were given arms and authority to establish local militias." Nevertheless, the U.S. was unwilling to engage Sunni militias and focused their efforts instead on the creation of state controlled security forces. In response militia members -- now considered "Sunni Rejectionists – joined the insurgency [used] these irregular methods of organizing and fighting" and also "adapted their traditional form of [guerilla warfare and tactics] to modern weapons and means."[92]

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[91] Richard H. Shultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 252.

[92] Schultz and Dew, 253.

The Sunni insurgency includes former regime elements of the Baath party, tribal groups, foreign fighters, and Islamic extremists such as al Qaeda.[93] Sunni tribes did not immediately join the insurgency, but instead waited to see what the future would hold. Ultimately what the future held for most Sunnis in Iraq was a declining standard of living, and increasing insecurity as the Coalition strategy emphasized on kinetic military operations and did not seek to engage the tribal sheiks.[94]

Prior to the invasion, U.S. military units were specifically trained to fight in a high intensity, conventional operation. The overall strategy was to defeat the Iraqi army and redeploy. This reflected President George W. Bush's commitment not to engage the U.S military in nation-building activities. During his 2000 presidential campaign he stated: "I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders. I believe the role of the military is to fight and win war…I believe we're overextended in too many places." [95] He continued to emphasize this strategy after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. However Iraq's post-conflict environment required the immediate employment of basic counterinsurgency and policing techniques, such as the non-violent engagement of local militias. Military units deployed to Iraq lacked this training. The U.S. military was not designed for post-conflict operations that involve soldiers engaging local leaders regarding subjects of governance, security, employment, basic service provision, etc. Given this and the absence of appropriate actors to undertake such engagement, military strategy remained kinetic, which ultimately alienated the population and encouraged them to ally with insurgent forces such as al Qaeda. Abdul Razak al Muaimi, a Sunni day laborer in his thirties, told a reporter that he chose to resist the occupation because of the way he was treated by Coalition forces. "U.S. soldiers searched my house. They kicked my Koran. They speak to me so poorly in front of my

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[93] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 92-124; W. B. Slocombe, "Iraq's Special Challenge: Security Sector Reform 'Under Fire'," *Bryden and Hänggi* (2004), 6-8.

[94] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 92, 104.

[95] John J. Hamre and Gordon R. Sullivan, "Toward Postconflict Reconstruction," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Autumn, 2002), 90 (accessed November 20, 2007).

children. It's not that I encourage my son to hate Americans. It's not that I make him want to join the resistance. Americans do that for me."[96] Other Sunni insurgents report similar treatment.

> There have been some that say 'hello' or 'peace be unto you' in Arabic to me…but others treat us like dogs. I saw one put his boot on the head of an old man lying on the ground [during a raid]. Even Saddam would not have done such a thing. It was then I realized that they had come as occupiers and not as liberators. So we began to meet and plan. We met with others and have tried to buy weapons. None of us are afraid to die, but it is hard. We are just men, workers, not soldiers…[97]

Unfortunately, this type of conventional 'one size fits all' tactical strategy that permeated most military engagements was employed instead of engaging local militias to assist national police forces with local security responsibilities.

The U.S. endorsement of a strong central government also encouraged Sunni militias to resist the Coalition. Sunni tribes have always resisted a strong central government because it is antithetical to tribal culture. It was even difficult for Saddam Hussein to deal with Sunni militias, despite the fact that his power base was in the Sunni areas. For example, members of the Dulaim tribe (of 750,000) based out of the city of Ramadi in the heart of the Anbar province, attempted to rebel against Saddam in 1992 and 1995, but were quickly suppressed by Saddam's praetorian security forces. Yet, because many members of the Dulaim tribe were integrated in the Baath party, Saddam was obligated to acknowledge their existence and compromise with them to forestall a major tribal rebellion.[98] U.S. refusal to recognize Iraqi tribal structures increased support for the insurgency. Tribal sheiks authority over the tribes rests upon their ability to provide financially for members of the tribe. Saddam recognized this, and used the sheiks as intermediaries between his government and the masses. When the U.S. failed

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[96] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 101.

[97] Hashim, 20.

[98] Hashim, 105.

to engaged the sheiks, the sheiks authority was undermined. As a result, military age males "joined criminal gangs or the insurgency" because the sheiks were no longer able to exercise authority over their actions. [99]

Much of the same continued from 2003 to 2006. Both stability and security continued to decline in Anbar. Combat operations dominated the agenda for Anbar in 2004. The city of Fallujah was witness to one of the largest military offensives since the invasion of Iraq. By April 2004, Fallujah had become a terrorist haven for both foreign fighters and terrorists such as Zarqawi. U.S. officials attempted to allow the newly formed Iraqi forces to take over security but would later succumb to insurgent violence. Thus a U.S. military offensive to regain the city of 300,000 commenced in the fall of 2004 leaving most of the city abandoned and destroyed. Since the majority of Sunnis felt that Iraq's budding political establishment was illegitimate, the elections that occurred in 2005 further exacerbated levels of instability in Sunni dominated areas such as Anbar. Moderate Sunni political groups such as the Iraqi Islamic party, the largest Sunni party, withdrew arguing that high levels of violence would prevent a "free and fair vote," while conservative Sunni groups continued to boycotted elections on the grounds that they were endorsed by the United States.[100] Further isolation of the Sunni population led to increased support for the insurgency which led to greater sectarian conflict. Many Sunni's later felt that the Iraqi government was not truly reflective of the Anbar province due to low voter turnout. By 2006, Anbar was embroiled in conflict with little to no hope for increased stability. The U.S. continued to pursue a strategy that placed greater emphasis on the development of Iraqi security forces represented by the government while virtually ignoring the employment of local tribes and their militias for local security. Levels of security and stability were so low that Brigadier General Carter Ham, the deputy director for regional operations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that Ramadi (the capital for Anbar), a city of approximately 450,000 is "probably the most

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[99] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, 106-107.

[100] Michael Howard, "Main Sunni Party Pulls Out of Iraqi Election," The Guardian, http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1380191,00.html (accessed December 9, 2007).

contentious city right now inside Iraq."[101]   After thirty-three U.S. military personnel died in Anbar province in August 2006, the Marine Corps chief intelligence analyst, Colonel (COL) Pete Devlin, recognized as one of their best intelligence officers, filed an "unusual secret report concluding that the prospects for securing [the] Anbar province are dim and that there is almost nothing the U.S. military can do to improve the political and social situation."[102]   The report outlined how the Sunni dominated province was devoid of any functional local security apparatus or government, which allowed insurgent groups such as al Qaeda to fill the vacuum. This was not an isolated assessment either. An anonymous Army officer reported that "we haven't been defeated militarily but we have been defeated politically – and that's where wars are won and lost."[103]   Others, including flag officers who found the report too pessimistic concur that Anbar might be lost, and suggested that the prospects for the rest of the country were less dire. However, given that Anbar encompasses over 30 percent of Iraqi land mass and borders Syria and Jordan, the loss of the province by the U.S. military would likely have had a significant influence on the political and security environment in the rest of Iraq.

The military was left with few options. The report acknowledged that a shortage of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers left it unable to maintain security beyond the perimeter of its Forward Operating Bases.   One option was a complete transfer of security to the fledgling Iraqi security forces. However, that would set the conditions for a full blown civil war. Another option was to reinforce Anbar province with an additional military unit slated for another area of Iraq, which would leave other commanders scrambling to fill the void in other parts of the country.[104]

By September 2006, one man recognized the need change strategy, and identified a third option.   U.S. Army Colonel (COL) Sean MacFarland, commander of First

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[101] "DoD News Briefing with Brig. Gen. Ham from the Pentagon," GlobalSecurity.org, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/05/mil-060523-dod01.htm (accessed December 9, 2007).

[102] Thomas E. Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq," The Washington Post, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/10/AR2006091001204.html (accessed November 21, 2007).

[103] Ricks.

[104] Ricks.

Brigade, First Armored Division responsible for the Sunni dominated city of Ramadi "was willing to try just about anything to win over the population and reduce violence in Ramadi."[105] In this case, anything meant engagement with Sunni militias. The strategy included stationing his units in vulnerable combat outposts instead of consolidating forces in heavily fortified Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). He felt as if he "was going the wrong way down a one way street" since his approach did not reflect the operational military strategy Sunni and Shia dominated provinces of Iraq.[106] In contrast to the prevailing strategy that focused on kinetic military operations, COL MacFarland opted to negotiate with Sunni sheiks. Based on MacFarland's initial success, the engagement strategy was adopted in Anbar province as a whole, dramatically improving levels of security and stability in less than twelve months.[107]

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[105] Jim Michaels, "An Army Colonel's Gamble Pays Off in Iraq," USA Today, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel_n.htm (accessed November 18, 2007, 2007).

[106] Michaels.

[107] Petraeus, *Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq*, 1-13.
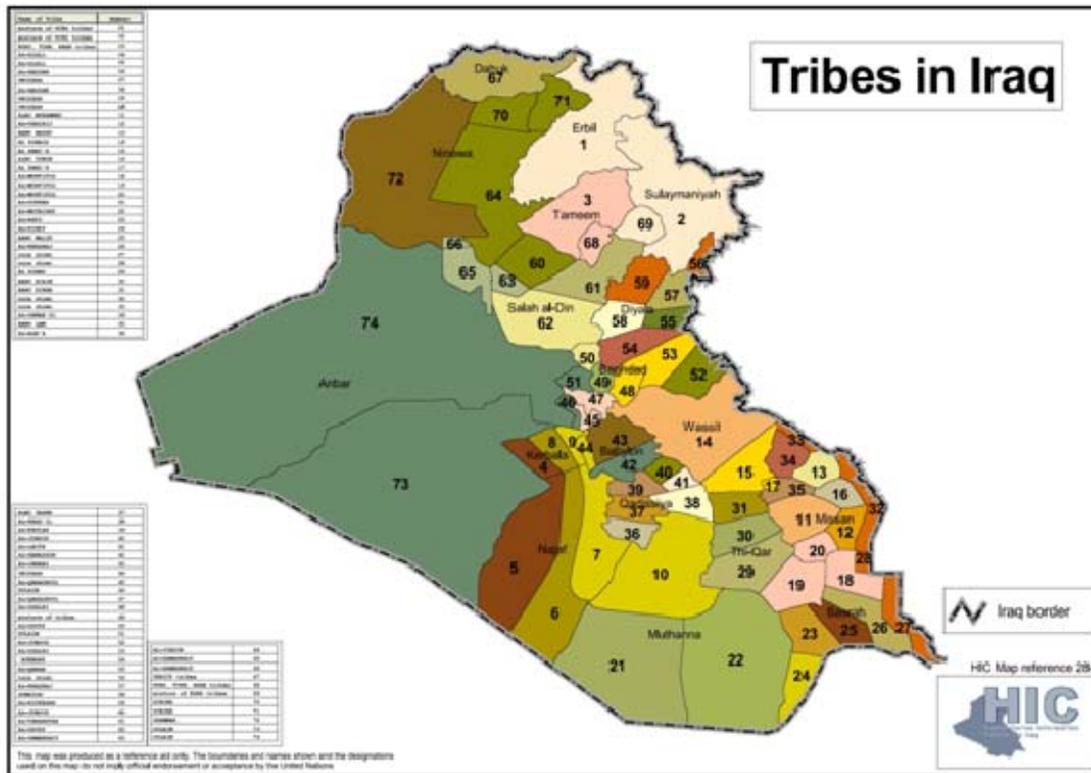
Figure 4.   Depiction of Tribal Affiliation in Iraq[108]

The decision of militia leaders to begin working with U.S. forces was based on two factors. The first was COL MacFarland's efforts to engage them to provide their own security, in recognition of the failure of the strategy of relying upon newly trained and poorly armed Iraqi security forces, which had assumed the role of security-provider prematurely and in an area they are unfamiliar with. The second factor was a new willingness of Sunni tribes to ally with Coalition forces for the purpose of driving out al-Qaeda forces after they killed scores of local Sunnis who refused to accept their hard-line puritanical ideology. The breaking point in this regard came when al Qaeda "killed a prominent sheik…and refused to let family members bury the body for four days, enraging Sunni tribesmen."[109]

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108 John Pike, "Global Security.Org Maps of Iraq," Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/maps.htm (accessed January 4, 2008).

109 Todd Pittman, "Sunni Sheiks Join Fight Vs. Insurgency," Washington Post.com, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/25/AR2007032500600.html (accessed November 10, 2007).

COL MacFarland's initial success grew from engagement with the Anbar Salvation Council also known as the (Anbar Awakening), founded by Sheik Abdul Sittar al-Rishawi of the Albu Risha tribe in September 2006. Prior to 2006, Sittar was known for little more than as a "ringleader [for] successful highway bandits" who offered short-lived support to al-Qaeda elements in efforts to defeat U.S. forces patrolling in Ramadi until he began to recognize the honest engagement COL MacFarland made with him in attempt to defeat al Qaeda terrorists wreaking havoc in the city of Ramadi. However, COL MacFarland recognized the importance of Sheik Sittar as soon as he met him in August 2006. When COL MacFarland met with Maamoun Sami Rashid al-Awani, the governor of Anbar province, on previous occasions it was always only the two of them. However, meetings at Sheik Sittar's compound would be filled to capacity with prominent local sheiks and local police officials who never showed up to meetings called by the governor of Anbar. The result of the initial engagement between MacFarland and Sittar was an agreement that "the U.S. would build and secure a series of police stations in Ramadi, where insurgents had run off the cops…In return, Sittar would send recruits, hundreds of them, to join local security forces, which MacFarland wants to see take the lead in the battle to regain control of the city."[110] There were immediate improvements to the local police force. In July 2006, police forces in Ramadi barely numbered 150. By November, nearly 500 had volunteered. This also led to the establishment of Emergency Response Units (ERU), which were overtly loyal to local sheiks and numbered over 2,500 personnel. They were approved and paid by the Ministry of Interior and trained in either forty-five day police training courses in Jordan or seven courses on a military base in Ramadi. Since the Sunni community had always resented the Shia-dominated security forces that were deployed to the Anbar province by the Shia-dominated government, the use of local militias as security providers was a welcome change. According to U.S. Army platoon leader, First Lieutenant Nathan Strickland, "20 percent of the credit for the change in Ramadi could be taken by U.S. forces….the vast majority of the turnaround is due to the sheiks."[111]

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[110] Kukis, *Turning Iraq's Tribes Against Al Qaeda*, 1-2.

[111] Pittman, *Sunni Sheiks Join Fight Vs. Insurgency*, 2.

Insurgent groups recognized the detrimental impact the U.S. strategy of engagement with militias was having on their objectives, and attempted to disrupt the relationship established between the Anbar Awakening and the U.S. military. They failed utterly. On September 13, 2007, Sheik Sittar was killed by al Qaeda affiliates in a roadside bomb attack just ten days after President George W. Bush met with him in a "surprise visit to Anbar to extol the Sunni cooperation that has made the province once Iraq's most dangerous, relatively safe."[112] Fortunately for the U.S. military and the Anbar Awakening, Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha, Sittar's brother, stepped in to fulfill his brother's role. Sheik Risha reaffirmed the strength of the alliance with the U.S. in the strongest terms: "[T]he martyrdom of Sittar will not affect this council because every member of this council has the same beliefs and the same motivations and this sad incident will not stop them from moving forward."[113]

The results of COL MacFarland's strategy of engagement with militias were staggering. In September 2006, twenty-five of thirty-one tribes located in Anbar province had joined the Anbar Awakening.[114] By October 2007, violent deaths in the Anbar province were down by 82 percent.[115] Additionally attacks against the U.S. military in August 2007 were just over 200 compared to October 2006 when they peaked at 1,400 a month. Colonel Martin Stanton, Chief of Reconciliation and Engagement for Multinational Corps, Iraq, reports that four months after COL MacFarland began his engagement with the Anbar Awakening, the "10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade saw its casualty rate plunge from 12 deaths a month to just one."[116] The engagement strategy also contributed to improved success with finding and clearing weapon caches. In

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[112] Alissa Rubin, "Sunni Sheik Who Backed U.S. in Iraq is Killed," NY Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/14/world/middleeast/14iraq.html (accessed September 14, 2007).

[113] Rubin.

[114] Paul Von Zielbauer, Khalid Al-Ansary and Ali Adeeb, "Iraqi Tribes to Join Forces to Fight Insurgents," New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/17/world/middleeast/17cnd-iraq.html?pagewanted=print (accessed December 12, 2007).

[115] Aseel Kami, "Violence in Iraq Drops Sharply: Ministry," Reuters, http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSCOL24813120071022?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&rpc=22&sp=true (accessed November 12, 2007).

[116] David Mays, "Concerned Iraqi Citizen Movement Saves American Lives," American Forces Press Services, http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48030 (accessed November 2, 2007).

Multinational Division North, 40 of 72 weapons caches were cleared by locally formed militia groups consisting of Concerned Local Citizens.[117] Overall, a total of 2,111 caches were found in just eight months of 2007 versus 1,222 in all of 2006.[118]

The Anbar model of engagement has been gradually accepted in other Sunni dominated areas of Iraq. In the rural town of Qarghulia, located in east Baghdad, local militias comprised of Sunnis and Shias now occupy 42 of 49 Coalition-approved traffic points. Prior to their employment, the area was patrolled by the national police, which are "mistrusted by the populace." Captain Troy Thomas, the commander responsible for this engagement, insists: "I couldn't do it without them," acknowledging that providing security is beyond the capabilities of his forces, and also that the militias "perform with a sensitivity that no U.S. soldier could match." He also suggests that they serve U.S. interests better that U.S. forces could: they are from the area and thus "they know who should be there and who shouldn't."[119]Approximately 39,000 militia members of the 70,000 countrywide are paid between $100 and $125 dollars a month. Although, this is approximately "half the starting wage for a government worker, [it constitutes] real cash for a young man" who was formerly unemployed and at greater risk to insurgent influence.[120] This new strategy has also had a residual effect on the unification of Sunni and Shia Sheiks against insurgents like al Qaeda. On November 8, 2007, U.S. military commanders were notified about a meeting involving over thirty Sunni and Shia tribes, which publicly declared their unification to fight against al-Qaeda and "work toward a lasting peace for their region."[121]

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[117] "Concerned Local Citizens Find and Remove IEDs, Mortars (Adwaniya)," Multi-National Force Iraq, http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15198&Itemid=21 (accessed December 15, 2007).

[118] Petraeus, *Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq*, 1-13.

[119] Doug Smith and Saif Rasheed, "Sects Unite to Battle Al Qaeda in Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, sec. World News, November 19, 2007, 2007, http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-concerned19nov19,0,973036.story?coll=la-home-center (accessed November 19, 2007).

[120] Smith and Rasheed.

[121] Jason Waggoner, "Sunni, Shia Sheiks Present United Front Against Al-Qaeda," Multi-National Force-Iraq, http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15170&Itemid=1 (accessed November 10, 2007).

The success of this particular engagement strategy has not been without its military skeptics. Many senior military officers felt the risks of arming groups that formerly fought against U.S. troops outweighed the benefits, and refused to reward any Sunni groups "who have been responsible, even tangentially, for any of the more than 29,000 American casualties in the war." Major General Rick Lynch, commander of the Third Infantry Division who is responsible for the major land mass south of Baghdad said that "no U.S. support would be given to any Sunni group that has attacked Americans."[122] Other officers have questioned the change in motives of many tribal sheiks. Colonel Martin Stanton, Chief of Multinational Corps Reconciliation Unit initially asked if "this is just another way that someone can position himself to siphon his share in the community and be the godfather?"[123] Yet, he soon realized that the will of people to stop the violence was greater than personal gain. Some others also changed their minds in recognition of the positive effects of engagement with local militias.[124]

3. The Semantics of Security

Clashes between the U.S. military and the Mahdi Militia in 2004 and rise of sectarian extremism in 2006 gave a negative connotation of the term 'militia.' The inroads made by U.S. forces in engaging and working with local militias groups since late 2006 has thus been accompanied by a semantic evolution. The estimated 70,000 local citizens who have joined formed local security groups that work alongside U.S. and Iraqi state security forces have not been referred to as militias. Instead, they are called Concerned Local Citizens, Critical Infrastructure Guard Force, Iraqi Citizen-Volunteers, and the Anbar Awakening.[125] The only difference between these groups and the militias

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[122] John Burns and Alissa Rubin, "U.S. Arming some Sunni Groups to Fight Al Qaeda," International Herald Tribune, http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/06/11/frontpage/strat.php (accessed November 14, 2007).

[123] Smith and Rasheed, *Sects Unite to Battle Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 3.

[124] Burns and Rubin, *U.S. Arming some Sunni Groups to Fight Al Qaeda*, 2-3.

[125] Mays, *Concerned Iraqi Citizen Movement Saves American Lives*, 1; Kukis, *Turning Iraq's Tribes Against Al Qaeda*, 4; Pittman, *Sunni Sheiks Join Fight Vs. Insurgency*, 3; Mike Pryor, *From the Ashes: Soldiedrs Help Adhamiyah Residents Set their Neighborhood on the Road to Recovery* (Camp Liberty, Baghdad, Iraq: Multi-National Division-Baghdad,[2007]) (accessed August 2006).; Smith and Rasheed, *Sects Unite to Battle Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 1.

prior to 2007 is that they are now recognized as legitimate by U.S. military forces. Approximately half of the 70,000 who have signed up are paid by with U.S. funds. The rest are serving as volunteers.[126] Developing and employing 'Concerned Local Citizens' has been an option since 2003, when many of the same neighborhoods were protected by local militias staffed by these same people. Instead, CPA Order 91 implemented a U.S. strategy of demobilizing the militias in favor of a national police force that is untrained, unfamiliar with the local terrains in which it was deployed, and unprepared to perform local security responsibilities. This led to dangerous power vacuum that could have been avoided if U.S. decision-makers had considered a strategy to engage, co-opt, and support local militias to perform local security functions and allow the Iraqi political and security apparatus to focus on regional and national security. The next section shows how the ongoing strategy of demobilization or defeat in the Shia-dominated areas of Iraq since 2004 has prevented U.S. forces from engaging and influencing moderate militias, as they did in Anbar, which in turn drove Shia militias to seek financial and material support from external actors on the one hand, and facilitated the explosion of criminal violence in these areas on the other. Comparison with the Anbar experience suggests that the U.S. could gain the support of popular Shia militias, which could serve as local security providers in these areas, reducing both violence and the need for larger numbers of U.S. forces.

4.   U.S. Strategy and Shia Militias

As in the Kurdish and Sunni cases above, Shia militias also gained considerable power after the fall of the Baath party in 2003, due to the security vacuum, which Coalition forces were unable to fill. Religious elites affiliated with militias assumed positions of authority by default. They were recognized by a majority of the Shia population as bearing the responsibility of providing security, governance and stability

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[126] Mays, *Concerned Iraqi Citizen Movement Saves American Lives*, 1.

after the collapse of the state.[127]   Immediately following the fall of Saddam Hussein, local neighborhoods were stricken with uncontrolled looting and vandalism for over two months.[128]   Cultural sites such as the National Library and Iraqi National Museum saw ancient artifacts and historical archives destroyed and burned. Public institutions such as Baghdad and Mosul University were stripped of all administrative and logistical supplies. Stability dissolved along with the Iraqi security forces, replaced by U.S. military force that was extremely effective in conducting conventional military operations but too small and not appropriately trained to perform security and stability operations in a country of 27 million people. Lawlessness was pervasive and local neighborhoods were forced to protect themselves. The establishment of security and stability services through the employment of local Shia militias at the local level was a natural process. Local citizens knew they could trust these groups to actually protect them, while Coalition forces were not allowed by their civilian leadership to intervene as looting and vandalism extirpated Iraq's infrastructure.[129]

Thus, Shia militia leaders and subordinates had little choice but to establish their own form of militia governance in place of the deposed regime and inability of U.S. forces to provide local security. Sadr City is an excellent example of local religious authorities establishing their own forms of governance in order to provide some semblance of order to their sprawling communities. However, they were careful not to promise what they could not deliver. Religious leaders such as Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Shuweili were inundated with requests that included such issues as employment, locating stolen goods, medical facilities, religious taxes, etc.[130] The Shia militia leaders established a number of committees using the only formal law left after the fall of the Baathist regime: Islamic law. In conjunction with Shuweili's outreach committee, Shia militias organized a number of other subcommittees

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[127] Alexandra Zavis, "Shiites Want the Help of Sadr's Militia," Los Angeles Times, http://fairuse.100webcustomers.com/fairenough/latimes888.html2007).; Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, 1st ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), 172-175, http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0623/2005040348-b.html (accessed September 22, 2007).

[128] *No End in Sight,* Documentary, directed by Charles Ferguson Magnolia, 2007) (accessed December 9, 2007); Peter Galbraith, "How to Get Out of Iraq," *New York Review of Books* 15, no. 8 (2004), 4-5.

[129] Ferguson, *No End in Sight.*

[130] Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, 183.

that included, "health services, media, religious edicts, Islamic law courts, and, somewhat ambitiously, electricity and telecommunications."[131]   However, this included the establishment of the notorious vice and virtue committee, which conflicted with the western democratic intentions of the CPA. This committee came to be feared by local citizens due to its strict interpretation of Islamic law. For example, women were strongly encouraged to be veiled, stores that sold alcohol were shut down, and movies considered indecent were banned.[132]   Yet, it was impossible to prevent Shia militias from establishing such groups because they were the legitimate authority available.

The Mahdi Militia was established by Moqtada al-Sadr, a young Shia cleric.[133] After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Moqtada al-Sadr resurrected the Sadr movement using Shia mosques throughout Iraq. In April 2003 Al-Sadr's followers, known as al-Sariyyun or Sadrists, created local militias of young Shia men who forcefully took over local hospitals and policing duties from the waning control of the Baath Party.[134] Moqtada al-Sadr's movement in 2003 can be described by its nationalist and religious undertones. He made his anti-American sentiments clear when he "thanked God rather than the U.S. for religious freedom and for liberating us from dictatorship" in

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[131] Shadid, 185.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Juan Cole, "The United States and Shi 'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba 'thist Iraq," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 4 (2003): 551-552. He is one of the surviving sons of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr (Sadr II) who was the cousin of the martyred revolutionary Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (Sadr I). Al-Sadr II advocated an Islamic state based on the Iranian teachings of Ruhu'llah Khomeini and Sadr I. Sadr II was much more radical in his interpretations of an Islamic state than Sadr I. Sadr II continued to press for an Iraqi state that would be governed by strict clerical jurisprudence until his assassination in 1999. He focused on the slums of eastern Baghdad because their impoverished conditions.   Radical teachings regarding that would change the status quo included a transition to a theocratic state similar to Iran appealed to the younger and impoverished Shia. His assassination created a list of martyred Shia revolutionaries that Moqtada al-Sadr could later use to gain popularity with the Shia population which falls in line with the historical track record of Shia religion dating back to the martyred death of Hussein Ali in 680. Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?* 1st ed. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 120. Hussein was a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad who was killed in a revered battle against a larger army commanded by Yazid, a Sunni caliph who eventually succeeded the Prophet Muhammad.

[134] Cole, 554-555. Al-Sadr colluded with Shia rivals such as the followers of the Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) to expel Baathists from Sadr City. They also took control of massive stockpiles of weapons and equipment in Baath Party weapon depots, a move which allowed them to enforce their regulations. Control of weapons and terrain were major triggers that caused the U.S. coalition to label the Mahdi militia as an impending threat.

April 2003.[135] This appealed to the younger generation of Shias because they were attracted to the idea that Sadr was there to challenge the moderate stance of other Shiites, and his reputation was based on challenging the U.S. occupation and CPA. Sadr gave the young Shia generation something to believe in and fight for. During a Mahdi Militia insurrection in 2004, a foot soldier stated, "I'm defending our country, our holy places….What is making America so crazy is that we are fighting for our religion."[136] The base of al-Sadr's support consists of impoverished Shias who were violently suppressed during Saddam's reign.[137] However, the U.S. conducted a number of tactical military operations that spelled defeat for the Mahdi Militia and caused Sadr to shift from an armed struggle to politics and future national elections. However, decades of decrepit conditions imposed upon the Shia population made it impossible for the United States military to establish better living conditions in a short period of time. This allowed Sadr to build more legitimacy in the eyes of the impoverished Shia population through the failures of the CPA. His base of support allows Moqtada al-Sadr to distance himself from occupation forces. Many impoverished Shia expected United States military troops to immediately free them from oppression and torture experienced under the Sunni Baath party.[138] Sadr's militia created security patrols for the Shia population, returned stolen products and distributed food aid to the local populace. Sadr's anti-American sentiment

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[135] Cole, 556. At the time, he capitalized on his Iraqi lineage, distinguishing himself from powerful Shia religious leaders like the moderate Sistani and Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, the former leader of SCIRI, both of whom are of Iranian descent. Al-Sadr's rhetoric specifically targeted both. He "insisted that leadership of Iraqis should be invested in Iraqis" and criticized SCIRI's leader Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim by stating that "[r]eligious people who went into exile should not have left." It continues to be characterized by "Puritanism, militancy, and intolerance that was very different from the genteel Najaf tradition." Al-Sadr's hard line approach and strict code of moral conduct attract the younger, impoverished generation who approve of retribution against violators of Sharia law.

[136] Tatar, *Emergence of Nationalist Identity in Armed Insurrections: A Comparison of Iraq and Nicaragua,* 188.

[137] Sadr City, Najaf, Karbala, Basra, Kut and Nasiriya are among the major cities with religious significance that attract Moqtada al-Sadr's followers. They are filled with young unemployed men seeking economic opportunity and a chance to join to a powerful organization recognized throughout the country, motives that have swelled the ranks of the militias. Estimates have ranged from 10,000 to 60,000. These estimates vary depending on levels of what defines their levels of support and influence within the organization.

[138] However, decades of decrepit conditions imposed upon the Shia population made it impossible for the United States military to establish better living conditions in a short period of time. This allowed Sadr to build more legitimacy in the eyes of the impoverished Shia population through the failures of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

sought to gain greater power by establishing himself as an alternative to the moderate Shia voice that was accepting of the U.S. coalition presence and the creation of a U.S.-backed government. Al-Sadr's presence and political strength will continue to grow. He has a loyal following among the Shia population. The Mahdi army is more organized and well entrenched in the political arena, controlling of 32 of the 275 seats in the parliament.[139]

Figure 5.   Poster of Moqtada al Sadr in Sadr City[140]

The Badr Corps is recognized as the military arm for the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Founded in 1982 by Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim as a separatist faction that evolved from the Dawa party, SCIRI settled in Iran as

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[139] "Radical Cleric's Bloc Quits Iraq Cabinet," in ABC News [database online]. April 16, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=3046308. (accessed May 8, 2007). The ministries of health, transportation, agriculture, and tourism and antiquities are all controlled by politicians backed by Moqtada al-Sadr.

[140] Photo taken by author during a patrol in Sadr City, Iraq on May 11, 2005

an opposition group to Saddam Hussein's regime.[141] It is described by Beehner and the Iraq Study Group as organized on sectarian lines and closely tied to the main political parties.[142] After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Badr Corps pledged to disarm its regional militias.   However, due to sustained violence, and the unwillingness by the Kurdish Peshmerga to disarm, they have kept their arms but have pressed to license their weapons with the Iraqi government.[143] SCIRI's current leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim is considered one of the most influential figures in Iraq. He does not hold a position in the government, but supports the current government and the coalition.[144] Paradoxically, the Badr Corps supports the transition of Iraq even though their funding and training is occasionally provided by Iran, the coalition's regional nemesis.[145] Ironically, this Tehran-based group has maintained very good relations with the United States, as seen in a recent meeting between U.S. President George Bush and SCIRI's al-Hakim in late 2006.[146] The Badr Corps supports the SCIRI's quest for a separate, Shia-controlled region in the southern

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[141] Kenneth Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006), 2-3. The Badr Corps history dates back to the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. Early members of the Badr Corps were Iraqi Shia defectors and captured soldiers supported by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Badr Corps is the second largest militia in Iraq. Estimates of membership in the Corps (also known as the Badr brigade, the Badr Reconstruction Corps, and the Badr organization) range from 10,000 to 20,000. The Badr Corps has a large presence in the British occupied areas of southern Iraq.

[142] Beehner, *Iraq: Militia Groups,* 2.

[143] Katzman, *Iran's Influence in Iraq,* 2.

[144] "Bush Meets Iraqi Shia Leader," in Al Jazeera [database online]. Saudi Arabia December 4, 2006 [cited 2007]. Available from http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/639A15E7-470E-4A37-9F72-3DB19724A296.htm (accessed May 1, 2007).

[145] Cole, *The United States and Shi 'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba 'thist Iraq,* 544. Current U.S. diplomatic policy refuses to acknowledge Iran for reasons that would require analysis beyond the scope of this thesis. It must be noted, however that a portion of the four million dollars the U.S. distributed to Ahmed Chalabi was intended to support the Iraqi National Congress, which was composed of SCIRI (based then in Tehran) and two moderate Shia political groups. The Badr Corps has experienced its share of violence and mistrust resulting in retaliation and the refusal to lay down their arms. On August 29, 2004, their influential moderate leader, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, was among the SCIRI members killed by a truck bomb in An Najaf. The death of al-Hakim and approximately one hundred others created a massive backlash against coalition forces for failing to maintain stability. This led to a collusion of convenience between the Badr Corps and the Mahdi Militia, both calling for immediate coalition withdrawal.

[146] Aljazeera.net, *Bush Meets Iraqi Shia Leader,* 2; "President Bush Meets with His Eminence Abdul-Aziz al Hakim, Leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq," in Office of the Press Secretary [database online]. Washington, D.C. December 4, 2006 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/12/20061204-7.html. (accessed May 1, 2007).

part of the country.[147] The ideological goals of SCIRI are based on the Iranian doctrine of velayat-e faqih, which calls for clerical intervention in political affairs.[148] They could be described as a militia with a primarily religious goal. Yet when this group oscillates their support between democracy and Islamic law, it soon becomes clear that religion has been used as a pragmatic tool to mobilize populous support for their politically driven goals.[149] SCIRI is a major supporter of the current Iraqi government, paradoxically making it difficult for the coalition to adopt a policy to eliminate militias in Iraq.

The Shia general population approves of the Badr Corps' overall political goal of a Shia autonomous region in control of a large portion of Iraqi oil reserves. Economic incentives appear in the form of the provision of basic services and employment. For example, the Badr Corps maintains a strong presence in the Iraqi police, public order brigades, and special commando units. Badr Corps' strong presence in Iraq's interior ministry has proven useful for the party's social mobilization.[150] The Badr Corps presents a difficult challenge to other state leaders in Iraq. They have been praised by current and former Iraqi political leaders, such as Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, for their organization and their ability to maintain security in certain regions. Iraq's former Interior Minister was a senior Badr Corps official. Furthermore, the Iraqi government supported establishment of the Wolf Brigades under the control of former Badr Corps officers and they have proven their mettle. They have fought alongside coalition and Iraqi units, but are notorious for the brutal torture, violence, and humiliation of Sunni insurgents. Their harsh methods of maintaining security promulgates sectarian violence through targeted revenge attacks against the Sunni population, and Iraqi political leaders

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[147] Beehner, *Iraq's Militia Groups,* 2. The Shia area would include nine oil-rich provinces.

[148] Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq,* 249. It is an important cause of the schism between Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Militia and SCIRI's Badr Corps. Moqtada has a nationalist appeal to Iraqis who remained in Iraq after 1991 during Saddam's repression of the Shia uprising, whereas the Badr Corps is often viewed as Iranian outsiders trying to capitalize on the power vacuum left by the fall of the Baath party. Furthermore, their allegiance to the emerging Iraqi government is tenuous and ambiguous.

[149] T. S. Mowle, "Iraq's Militia Problem," *Survival* 48, no. 3 (2006): 46, 49.

[150] Beehner, *Iraq: Militia Groups,* 3. With high unemployment, a job in the Iraq political system is highly desirable. For example, the Wolf Brigade, a special Interior Ministry police commando unit controlled by Badr Corps leaders, employs nearly 2,000 Badr Corps members for the very respectable monthly wage of 700,000 dinars ($400).

like the former Minister of Interior Bayan Jabr who has turned a blind eye to their questionable techniques.[151]   The Badr Corps provides basic services to Shia communities, including   structured security and support for local governance, but they are implicated in mass killings of Sunni Muslims, frequently clash with British occupation forces, refuse to disarm, and occasionally resist some government policies.

The relationship among the Shia militias is ambiguous. Although Moqtada al-Sadr promotes an Iraqi nationalist view of Shia unity, he is supported by Iran. There are numerous reports of Badr Corps clashes with other Shia militias and coalition forces, including struggles over the southern city of Amarah in July 2006 and for control of the shrine of Imam 'Ali in Najaf.[152] Competition for political power and regional authority will continue to spark clashes between the Mahdi Militia and the Badr Corps, but at the end of the day they have one thing in common: their commitment to Shia political rule without foreign intervention. This commonality is a key discriminator between Iraqi militias, insurgencies and criminal organizations. A basic premise of Shia militias is to maintain power at the local level but still cooperate with the government in order to unify with the government in an effort to remove a coalition presence from Iraq. For example, Moqtada al-Sadr demonstrated this by withdrawing his political movement from Iraq's struggling government on April 16, 2007. This gives Al-Sadr an opportunity to gain support by showing the Shia population that the Mahdi Militia can provide social services, religious support, and security.

The current U.S. strategy towards Shia militias can be traced back to documents published by the CPA after the fall of the Baath party. Many of the Shia clerical leaders were overjoyed with the removal of the former dictator; however emotions of happiness were replaced with skepticism when the CPA began imposing rules and laws similar to those of the former Baath party government. Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Shuweili, an activist in the Sadr movement who was released from jail (Abu Ghraib) in October 2002 after being swept up in a mass arrest campaign following the assassination of Moqtada al-Sadr's father in 1999, was

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[151] Beehner, *Shiite Militias and Iraq's Security Forces,* 1.

[152] Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, "Mahdi Militia Seize Amarah," *The International News*, October 20, 2006; Beehner, *Iraq's Militia Groups,* 2.; Cole, *The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'thist Iraq,* 563.

the leader of the Sadr outreach committee in 2003. He expressed distress about the edicts of the newly established occupation by Coalition forces, suggesting that it had essentially established itself as another dictator, demanding that the new local councils it established accept and honor "all decrees, orders, and instructions" published by the CPA.[153] Shia religious elites, such as Shuweili, who had faced oppression from the ruling Baath party, were particularly angry about the perceived lack of consideration given to the religious community, especially since the justification for the invasion changed from finding weapons of mass destruction to establishing democracy through regime change. They felt that if the intent of the U.S. was to transfer power to the Iraqi majority then all leaders, both political and religious should have been involved. Shuweili stated: "If you just obey their orders, then you are doing no more than following their wishes…Their orders should take into account Islam…Every country has its own traditions – Syria, Iran, America, Africa. They should respect Islam and our traditions."[154] Removing a dictator and replacing it with another form of governance accepted only by a foreign occupier could lead to unwelcome consequences. By excluding certain elements of the population, the CPA created animosity among local religious and non-participating political leaders, and their supports in the neighborhoods. As a result, religious leaders like Shuweili began to develop their own plans for the future of Iraq. In order to protect themselves from Sunni insurgents and former regime elements from the Baath party, Shia militias began to arm themselves in self-defense. The Badr Corps and the Mahdi Militia were the two largest Shia militias to respond to threats of violence. The Badr Corps is active largely in the British controlled areas of Southern Iraq, while the Mahdi Militia has a greater presence in U.S. controlled areas of Iraq, and therefore will be the focus of this analysis.[155]

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[153] Shadid, 184.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Shultz and Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat*, 239.

5.   Mahdi Militia

During the initial post-conflict operations in 2003, the Mahdi militia (also known as Mahdi Army) was not seen as a threat, but rather as a trouble-making group that got in the way of American interests. Civilian personnel with oversight of reconstruction projects in militia-dominated areas such as Sadr City made no attempt to understand their design or intention.[156] The Mahdi militia served in a relatively non-threatening fashion in the eyes of most Shia neighborhood residents, appealing in particular to the majority opposed to the Coalition presence. As the U.S. occupation dragged on with little improvement in security, unfulfilled promises for reconstruction, and continued aggressive military tactics, residents became angry.[157] Initially, the mantra of the Mahdi Militia was support and protection. Its intention was to pursue a non-violent, religious path to serve and support local neighborhoods. Its members were prohibited from carrying weapons, and the organization was mandated to "devote itself to social work and the poor."[158] This was no small feat: areas such as Sadr City were overpopulated, underemployed and basic services were severely lacking. One of Sadr's lieutenants announced: "We are founding the army without weapons. There is no intention to use any force."[159] The lack of communication by both the Mahdi militia and the CPA only nurtured divisiveness between the two groups. The CPA lacked a strategy for dealing with the growing threat of militias that were increasingly anti-American. Very few U.S. civilian or military personnel understood the Mahdi Militia's role in society or the depth of popular support for it. U.S. military forces were identified as the most appropriate tool to deal with this irregular threat. However, these forces were designed and trained for conventional combat operations, and thus employed kinetic operations.

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[156] Anderson and Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, Or Division?*, 133-134

[157] Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, 258-259.

[158] Shadid, 258.

[159] Ibid.

Figure 6. (From Left) Iraqi Army Company Commander, NAC Chairman, and Sadr City Cleric (affiliated with the Mahdi Militia) Discussing Governance During Neighborhood Advisory Council Meeting[160]

6. Non-engagement and Stability

Since major combat operations have subsided between U.S. and militia forces in 2004, there has not been a concerted effort to engage or co-opt Shia militias to improve local security and stability. Sadr resisted Coalition forces in three phases: "the peaceful resistance, like speeches and demonstrations; the military resistance, which was represented by two uprisings all over Iraq, and the political resistance, which we attained by reaching political posts and demanding a timetable for the departure of U.S troops."[161]

There has been an inherent conflict between the United States and Moqtada al Sadr since August 2003, when the Mahdi Militias was officially formed. The establishment of a strong central government led by Iraqi officials that were appointed by the CPA served as the initial method for transferring control from U.S. to Iraqi hands.

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[160] Picture taken by author on April 26, 2005 during a Neighborhood Advisory Council meeting in Sadr City, Iraq.

[161] Scott Johnson, "An Army of One," Newsweek.com, http://www.newsweek.com/id/47679 (accessed December 2, 2007, 2007).

However, Moqtada al Sadr believed (and still does) that re-building the country should be done Iraqis without the presence of a foreign occupation. From 2003 to April 2004 Sadr supporters protested the occupation through speeches and peaceful demonstrations. This only solidified the CPA's stance that Sadr was a trouble-making firebrand cleric and rabble-rouser intent upon destabilizing the country.[162] However, to many of his followers, largely the young, unemployed, and dispossessed, he is viewed as a leader who has stood up for the underdog.

Lack of an engagement strategy coupled with saber-rattling by both sides led to a military struggle that began in April 2004 and culminated with a negotiated cease fire in October 2004, in which Sadr publicly announced the Mahdi Militia would not attack American forces.[163] However, Sadr officials emphasized that attacks on Coalition soldiers could continue with justification if the actions of American soldiers were deemed to be disrespectful, asserting that "avenging dignity is part of the Arab identity."[164] Therefore, attacks such as sniper fire, and roadside bombings such as Explosively Formed Penetrators (EFP- a signature bomb employed by the Mahdi Militia) became more prevalent.[165]

If the militia uprisings of 2004 were the nadir of the Mahdi Militia openness to U.S. engagement, then political maneuvering by the Sadr bloc in 2005 was the apogee of potential engagement. However, tactical military units made little effort to integrate local Sadr bureaus (political offices that represented the Mahdi Militia) into the reconciliation process and instead continued to promote the creation of local neighborhood advisory

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[162] Ilana Ozernoy and Bay Fang, "Firebrand Cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr's Deadly Game of Chicken," US News and World Report, http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/040830/30iraq.htm (accessed December 10, 2007).

[163] Mark Seibel and Leila Fadel, "U.S. Officials: Militias Main Threat to Iraq," McClatchy Washington Bureau, http://www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/18567.html (accessed December 10, 2007), Johnson, *An Army of One*, 1.

[164] Seibel and Fadel, *U.S. Officials: Militias Main Threat to Iraq*, 3.

[165] This was recognized through personal experience. On May 17, 2005 a sister company skirmished with members of the Mahdi Militia in Sadr City that resulted in the death of at least three militiamen and an unspecified number of wounded. The following day, a sniper affiliated with the Mahdi Militia shot and killed PFC Lee A. Lewis, a medic assigned to the company after he finished handing out sweets to children. After the company conducted tactical elicitation of the area, the sniper fire was presumed to be an act of retaliation by the Mahdi Militia for the combat actions that occurred the day prior.

councils (NACs) and District Advisory Councils (DACs) that were inadequately resourced by the government and unsupported by the local population, which saw them as illegitimate. Meanwhile Sadr bureaus served as the legitimate power broker and service provider in these neighborhoods.[166] The chance for engagement with local units of the Mahdi Militia slowly waned by 2006 due to the increased amount of sectarian violence and the inability of Iraqi and U.S. security forces to prevent it. This also resulted in greater revenge killings by militia radicals who felt the need to retaliate against other non-Shia groups out of revenge. For example, in 2007 "more than 220 people were killed … as Sunni Arab militants unleashed suicide bombers and gunfire on the Shia pilgrims who converged in Karbala to mark the death of Imam Hussein, a grandson of the prophet Muhammad," because Moqtada al-Sadr decided not to use the Mahdi Militia as a security force to protect the millions of Shia pilgrims who descended upon the holy city of Karbala for this annual religious ceremony.[167] This was followed by an unspecified increase in the number Sunnis killed execution-style; the signature of Shia extremist groups.

Soon after taking over as the U.S. military leader in Iraq at the beginning of 2007 General Petraeus recognized the potential to engage the Mahdi militias for purposes of reconciliation, suggesting that "the militia could have a policing role [noting that] …many countries have auxiliary police forces."[168] Nearly nine months later, General Petraeus reinforced this statement when in December 2007 he "applauded Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr for helping, through a cease fire, to reduce violent attacks in Iraq by 60 percent since June."[169]

A number of cities in Southern Iraq, including Karbala are heavily influenced by both the Mahdi Militia and the Badr Organization. In these cities, the U.S. military non-

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[166] This statement is reflective of personal experience and commentary with active members of the Sadr Bureau and Mahdi Militia during service as a Company and Troop Commander in Sadr City and surrounding cities such as Adhamiyah, Shaab, Ur, Shwarim Um Jidr and smaller cities and towns on the eastern outskirts of Baghdad from January 2005 to January 2006.

[167] Zavis, *Shiites Want the Help of Sadr's Militia*, 1.

[168] Zavis, 1.

[169] Ann Scott Tyson, "Petraeus Says Cleric Helped Curb Violence," Washington Post, http://ebird.afis.mil/ebfiles/e20071207565802.html (accessed December 10, 2007).

engagement strategy, with its refusal to embrace the positive contributions they could make to local security, has contributed to a power struggle over who will control the areas after the departure of Coalition forces. In August 2007, clashes between the Badr Organization and the Mahdi Militia over political control of Karbala led to the death of approximately 50 people.[170]   Therefore, the likelihood of ongoing security when U.S. forces withdraw is even higher in these areas than elsewhere as a result of inter-militia power struggles.

The question also arises as to whether the unwillingness by U.S. military forces to engage Shia militias correlates to an increase or decrease in number of attacks by them. For example, operations conducted by the commander of Multinational Division Center have primarily focused on defeating Shia extremists (groups supported by Iran) through kinetic operations designed to eliminate enemy leaders, munitions and their ability to train.[171]   The number of attacks has fallen 55 percent since June 2007, but much of this can be attributed to the U.S. military's temporary increase of 20,000 soldiers that will only last through mid-2008. Even with the temporary increase in soldiers, the decline is less than the 70% drop witnessed in Anbar province *prior* to the U.S. troop surge.[172] Although there is no doubt that military operations are needed to eliminate these elements, the continued failure to engaging local militia groups who, in concert with Iraqi security forces, could contributed significantly to local security and stability after the departure of U.S. forces in March 2008, means that these gains are likely to be temporary.

7.   Militia Responses to U.S. Non-engagement Strategy I: Criminalization

In the fall of 2006, as the strategy of engagement was unfolding in Anbar province, the U.S. military initiated a reinvigorated effort to reduce militia influence in

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[170] Kami, *Violence in Iraq Drops Sharply: Ministry*, 1.

[171] Tim Kilbride, "Power, Influence Dictate Patterns of Violence in Central Iraq," American Force Press Service, http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=47121 (accessed November 27, 2007).

[172] Kristen Roberts, "Pentagon Chief Gates in Iraq as Violence Drops," Reuters, http://ebird.afis.mil/ebfiles/e20071205565484.html (accessed December 10, 2007).

Shia areas through an aggressive campaign of tactically precise operations to arrest or eliminate senior militia commanders. These efforts had significant tactical success, but the effect was to create a vacuum of power that has been filled by immature and incompetent junior members, who have turned to criminal activity. Whereas the Mahdi Militia was formerly recognized as a group that protected local neighborhoods from Sunni insurgents, and also doubled as "helpers, [who brought] cooking gas and other necessities to needy families," now many militia members are nothing more than young criminal thugs.[173] Even militia political offices known as Sadr Bureaus (located in most Shia dominated cities) recognize the rise of illegal activities. One Sadr Bureau representative from Shuala, described the recent wave of kidnapping, robbery and murder as "the work of criminals who merely call themselves Mahdi Army members."[174] Many young fighters, who do not have a clear understanding of what the militia is supposed to stand for, now use the name to pursue criminal activities. These activities involve profiting from the sales of vehicles and residences of the deceased and displaced. "Now its young guys – no religion, no red lines," according to a 40 year-old Shia named Abbas who lives in Southern Baghdad. "They are kids with guns, who have cars and money. Being kids, they are tempted by all of this," said another Shia resident who lives in the town of Topchi in Western Baghdad.[175] A former militia member told a reporter in late 2007: "Don't call it the Mahdi Army. It was the Mahdi Army when people in it had a conscience."[176] As a result of this disintegration, a schism has developed between the Mahdi Militia and the Shia community, and residents have become more reliant upon U.S. forces for security as the "surge" strategy increased the number of U.S. forces on the ground. U.S. Army Major Mark Brady, who works with the National Division-Baghdad Reconciliation and Engagement Cell, states that "something has got to be not right if they are going to risk calling tips hot line or approaching a Joint Security Station (American

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[173] Sabrina Tavernise, "Relations Sour between Shiites and Iraq Militia," New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/world/middleeast/12mahdi.html?hp2007).

[174] Tavernise.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

neighborhood minibuses)."[177]   Indeed, the number of accurate tips that Sheiks from the Shia community have provided the American military has skyrocketed since September 2007.   For example, in late October 2007, the U.S. military launched three separate raids against Shia "criminals" in the Mahdi Militia stronghold of Sadr City that were reportedly "specializing in kidnapping operations."[178]   The raids resulted in the killing of 49 suspected criminals, but also led to the deaths of women, children, and the elderly according to Abdul Mehdi al Muteyri, an official of the Sadr Bureau who lashed out against that attacks by stating these unilateral attacks further demonstrate "the indiscriminate monstrosity…on this crowded area."[179]   Although, this is an effective strategy in tactically removing enemy combatants, the question of whether the second and third order effects of such unilateral, kinetic operations leave more to be desired than gained.   This suggests that if Shia militias were integrated into overall security plan (similar to the new security plan in Anbar) they could serve as an intermediary between occupation forces and support the Iraqi police while reducing the level of collateral damage that results from a major military raid. The strategy of non-engagement towards a popular militia that has a powerful influence over the local neighborhood forces the U.S. military to defend actions now recognized by the locals as "barbaric," while simultaneously denying that innocent civilians were killed.   Many of these kidnapping operations threaten local communities and are opposed by the militias, but U.S. opposition to the militia prevents the militia from attempting to respond to them, where engagement on an issue of mutual concern would likely lead to a much more effective response, less collateral damage, and greater local security and stability.

On the surface then, the targeted tactical strikes appear to have been successful: the Mahdi Militia has been significantly weakened and stripped of much of its popular support.   But the weakening of the militia has resulted in greater criminal activity and

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[177]   Sabrina Tavernise, "Relations Sour between Shiites and Iraq Militia," New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/world/middleeast/12mahdi.html?hp2007).

[178]   "US Raid Kills Iraqi 'Criminals'," BBC News - Middle East, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7054968.stm (accessed November 28, 2007).

[179]   Ibid.
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instability at the local level. How then does this support the coalition's overall objective of reducing its footprint? If U.S. forces are pulled back, who will provide local security? The fundamental issue of local security, omnipresent since the fall of Saddam, remains unaddressed in the Shia areas of Iraq. The popular de-legitimizing effects of the tactical decapitation has only reinforced the destabilizing effects of the U.S. refusal to recognize the legitimacy of Shia militias in the first place, increasing the likelihood of exacerbated instability in areas where the U.S. military reduces its footprint -- either because it must transition authority to unprepared governmental security forces or because it can no longer sustain troop levels associated with the temporary "surge" strategy. The potential for instability remains high if the U.S. is left with no option other than to hand responsibility for local security over to Iraqi Security forces who remain ill prepared, and whom the local populace refuses to trust. According to a report submitted by an independent commission that assessed state of security forces over the summer of 2007 noted that the Iraqi Police Service "is incapable today of providing security at a level sufficient to protect Iraqi neighborhoods from insurgents and sectarian violence" whereas the National Police have proven to be "operationally ineffective, and sectarianism in these units may fundamentally undermine their ability to provide security. [In sum] The force is not viable in its current form."[180]

8. Militia Responses to U.S. Non-engagement Strategy II: Externalization

The U.S. strategy for achieving stability clearly favors greater emphasis placed on U.S. military forces and poorly trained, dishonest, state security forces leading to greater stability in the long run and allowing the U.S. to reduce its force levels in the foreseeable future. This scenario presents a number of problems. First, U.S. and Iraqi government efforts to eliminate local militia groups without providing as trustworthy, sustainable security force to fill their role will likely lead to neighborhoods being more susceptible to terrorist influence, crime and violence. Second, militias perceived as legitimate by the

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[180] James L. Jones, *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies : Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, 2007), 10, http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS85852 (accessed September 29, 2007).

local communities have been characterized by the U.S. and Iraqi leadership as bands of outlaws threatening U.S. and Iraqi security. This exacerbates the inability of the Iraqi government and U.S. military to positively influence the local community, as insecurity grows while prominent members of the community that have served as local protectorates are vilified. This has led much of the Shia population that was formerly protected by the militia to see the government as not only untrustworthy, but a "threat to their existence as well."[181]

The U.S. policy regarding the dissolution of Shia militias (as per CPA Order 91, June 2004) has been counter-productive to the future stability of Iraq. Evidence suggests that Iranian sponsored groups have gladly accepted the role with training, funding and equipping Shia militias that are similar in fashion to the strategy that U.S. forces taken in training, equipping and funding Sunni militias to assume a greater role in combating insurgents groups, specifically al Qaeda, at the local level. In November 2007, Rear Admiral Gregory Smith a senior U.S. military spokesman stated that "Iran has been the principal supplier of weapons, arms, training and funding of many militia groups."[182] This suggest that the U.S. strategy towards Shia militias can be attributed to proliferation of dangerous factions and splinter militia cells that have turned to external states for funding and training, which can also be attributed to increased sectarian tension and violence.

Evidence in Shia-dominated cities also suggests that Shia militias are increasingly influenced by external actors. Shia militia strongholds of Karbala and Najaf are rarely patrolled by U.S. forces any more. The majority of U.S. forces are deployed in and around Baghdad leaving only a small U.S. military contingent to conducts short visits with local officials without being able to confirm the presence of Iranian influence. Yet U.S. intelligence reports suggests that these cities are where the elite Iranian military force know as the Revolutionary Guard has "opened training camps in the area for Iraqi

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[181] Glenn R. Thomas and Terry Hodgson, "Militias: Is there a Role for them in U.S. Foreign Policy?" *Special Warfare Journal* 20, no. 6 (November-December, 2007), 18 (accessed November 16, 2007).

[182] Sudarsan Raghavan and David Finkel, "US Cites Drop in Attacks Sine Build-Up; Bombs Kill 20," *Washington Post* November 19, 2007, 2007, http://ebird.afis.mil/ebfiles/e20071119562323.html (accessed November 19, 2007).

guerillas"[183] to allow "Shia militants [to] gather, train and arm themselves…for attacks against U.S. forces farther north."[184] In November 2007, U.S. Army Colonel Donald Farris who is in charge of the notoriously dominated area of Baghdad called Sadr City and Adhamiya said that "there has been no decline in the operations of Shi'ite extremist groups or the support they receive from Iran in weapons, funding, or training."[185] Colonel Farris recognizes that the 2004 cease-fire with the Mahdi Militia is still in effect, but that the "special groups" that evolved from the militia outside of U.S., Iraqi, and Sadr's oversight have continued their operations. Two Iraqis recently captured by his forces "admitted to receiving training in Iran and [are] acting as agents for a group in Iran."[186] Recent evidence highlighting increase in number of Iranian made roadside bombs known as explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) found in Colonel Farris' area of operations also suggest that extremist militias are gaining strength and continuing to turn to Iran for support. Nine EFPs were either discovered or employed in October 2007 compared to seven in May 2007.[187] These are just a few examples of how militias initially created to support and secure local neighborhoods, outlawed by U.S. policy-makers turned to Iran. Unfortunately this has allowed for the negative influence of outside actors like Iran to employ a strategy of engagement, increase the number of extremist groups with nefarious intentions while simultaneously destabilizing the positive influence of Shia militias which has led to a more threatening security environment for U.S. forces, Iraqi forces and local residents. This evidence makes it difficult to ignore the unwillingness by U.S. decision-makers to engage and co-opt Shia militias like the Mahdi Army and how that may have also prevented extremist members formerly tied to militias from seeking and accepting support from Iranian military units.

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[183] Mark Kukis, "Has the US Ceded Southern Iraq?" Time, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1669249,00.html?xid=feed-yahoo-full-world-related (accessed November 26, 2007).

[184] Kukis.

[185] Kristen Roberts, "U.S. Commander: Iran Still Supporting Iraqi Militias," Yahoo News, http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20071126/ts_nm/iraq_usa_iran_dc (accessed 11/26/2007, 2007).

[186] Roberts.

[187] Ibid.

Figure 7. **Iraqi Interpreter Holding the back plate of an Incoherent Spray Explosively Formed Penetrator**[188]

9. Another Opening to Engagement

Moqtada al Sadr and the U.S. have the same goal: for the U.S. to reduce its military footprint as soon as possible and ultimately leave altogether leaving behind a unified and stable Iraq with a functioning government. Unlike many of the Iraqi insurgents who have risen up against the U.S. occupation, al Sadr's militia has supported the Iraqi government since 2005. This support is reflected in the participation of Sadr's party, the United Iraqi Alliance in the government. This does not mean that uncooperative militias are unwilling to negotiate a solution for stability. For example, in September 2007, Finland held a secret peace seminar led by the Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, which included representatives of Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr and one of the largest Sunni political groups led by Adnan al Dulaimi. The seminar was held for rival factions so they could "examine how lessons learned from peace processes in South

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[188] Picture taken by the author on April 28, 2005 during a post-blast exploitation mission of an EFP attack against a military police convoy near the Northeastern edge of Sadr City, Iraq.

Africa and Northern Ireland could be applied to Iraq."[189] Moqtada al Sadr also stated that in August 2007 that he "would welcome a planned expansion of the United Nations mission in Iraq if it was designed to help Iraqis rebuild their country."[190] This suggests a willingness by Sadr to be part of the solution in Iraq, and perhaps to work with the U.S. toward that end.

Figure 8.   Lieutenant Colonel Gary Luck Jr., Commander of Third Battalion, Fifteenth Infantry Regiment Shakes Hands with Sheiks from Sadr City[191]

Al Sadr also suspended his militia activities for six months beginning in August 2006 to help create a favorable environment for reconciliation talks. According to Sadr aide Sheik Hazim al Araji, the suspension was also intended to "rehabilitate [the militia] in a way that will safeguard its ideological image."[192] The suspension of violence

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[189] "Feuding Iraqis Meet for Secret Peace Seminar in Finland," Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/09/0e22a4fb-8860-4bb4-8eff-9e3756ba9009.html (accessed November 28, 2007).

[190] "Al-Sadr for UN Troops in Iraq," Indian Express, http://www.indianexpress.com/story/211645.html (accessed November 28, 2007).

[191] Photo taken by author on April 4, 2005 after members of Third Battalion, Fifteenth Infantry Regiment conducted a reconciliation meeting with sheiks of Sadr City, Iraq, who were affiliated with the Mahdi Militia.

[192] David Rising, "Al-Sadr Suspends Militia Activity in Iraq," ABC News, http://www.abcnews.go.com/print?id=3536599 (accessed November 27, 2007).

explicitly included U.S. forces. This highlighted Sadr's willingness to cooperate with US forces to rehabilitate the Mahdi Militia so that it can return to protecting local communities, while expelling criminal and extremists elements "who had used the group as a cover for killings and other crimes."[193] The plan, according to Qusay Abdul Wahab, an Iraqi politician and supporter of al Sadr, was that "those who do not obey the Sadr office will surface. The Iraqi security forces will go after them," and it would be acceptable for U.S. forces to do the same. A Mahdi Militia street commander from Sadr City underlined the willingness to cooperate with the U.S. by stating that "anyone who fights the Americans now is not from the Mahdi Army. Moqtada al Sadr sent this order to freeze the Mahdi Army for just one reason: to distinguish between good and bad Mahdi Army members."[194] Furthermore, Sadr demonstrated a willingness to actively pursue extremists who were destabilizing local communities by stating that "they [Mahdi Militia] recently captured 10 Iranians with Al Qaeda operatives in eastern Diyala province and punished them." The militia commander then stated that his forces simple dealt with them, smiling and refusing to say what they had done, implies that the captured element had been executed.[195] Yet there is still no cooperation between the militia and U.S. forces, limiting the potential positive impact on stability of these initiatives.

However, this is some indication that the U.S. may finally be considering a change in strategy with respect to the Mahdi Militia. In his testimony to Congress on September 11, 2007 General Petraeus hinted at an opening vis-à-vis Shia militias when he said: "you're not going to kill or capture all of the Sadr militia anymore than we are going to kill or capture all the insurgents in Iraq."[196] Debates have also arisen inside the White House over whether it should continue to pursue a defeat strategy or consider the feasibility of engagement. Given the increased number shootouts and bombings by members of militia splinter cells, the willingness to negotiate by both the U.S. military

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[193] Ned Parker, "U.S. Seeks Pact with Shiite Militia," Los Angeles Times, http://fairuse.100webcustomers.com/fairenough/latimesB92.html (accessed November 28, 2007).

[194] Parker.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid.

and militia moderates has grown.[197] Finally, there are reports of small contingents of U.S. military and moderate militia members already negotiating. U.S. Army officials responsible for West Baghdad "have extended their hand to the Jaish al Mahdi [Arabic name for the Mahdi Militia]."[198] Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Patrick Frank, the officer responsible for initiating these negotiations asserted: "We have to craft a way ahead. We have to find a workable solution with the community leaders, religious leaders, and essentially the local political leaders within Jaish al Mahdi."[199] One U.S. diplomat recognized that the same thing occurred with the Sunni's although it took over a year and a half to achieve proven levels of stability that it has. And it paid off. According to LTC Franks there was a reduction of violence in his area of operations after both sides agreed to a limit in military operations. The street commander agreed to suspend attacks for two weeks in conjunction with an order by Moqtada al Sadr to suspend militia activities for six months (that was announced two weeks previously) and the U.S. military agreed to a reduction of raids in their district.[200] It remains to be seen whether LTC Frank's strategy will be an exception to the rule, or whether it will be adopted and employed by the other U.S. military units that interact with Shia militias or even adopted as policy by the U.S. military and/or political leadership.

C.   CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the effects of the U.S. strategy towards militias in three different areas of Iraq between 2003 and 2007. The analysis shows a consistent correlation between high levels of conflict and instability and a U.S. strategy of non-engagement toward militias. From the beginning of the invasion, U.S. policy endorsed the existence and operation of the Kurdish Peshmerga, and they have proven an effective partner, consistently maintaining peace and stability and even facilitating prosperity during tumultuous periods of instability since 2003. More recently, the U.S. decision to

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[197] Ned Parker, "U.S. Seeks Pact with Shiite Militia," Los Angeles Times, http://fairuse.100webcustomers.com/fairenough/latimesB92.html (accessed November 28, 2007).

[198] Parker.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

endorse Sunni militias in the Anbar province has resulted in one of Iraq's most dangerous provinces becoming one of its safest in a matter of months. In both instances, engagement has led to improved security, governance and economic performance. Evidence from the Shia areas suggests that a strategy of engagement would likely have similar effects there as well. Overall stabilization has little hope of success if the U.S. engagement policy with respect to militias is not implemented fairly and equally towards the major Sunni, Shia and Kurdish militias.

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III.   CASE STUDY- THE PALESTINE MANDATE

A.   INTRODUCTION

During their occupation of Palestine from 1917 to 1948, the British tested a number of different strategies vis-à-vis indigenous militia forces. This chapter provides a within case analysis much as the previous chapter did for Iraq. The next chapter will then present a comparative analysis of the two cases. In the early years of the occupation, the British used strategies of engagement toward militias and later changed course and adopted a strategy of non-engagement that ultimately resulted in the inability of the British to maintain a stable environment.   The chapter shows that the policy of engagement ultimately allowed the Jewish community to establish an effective and organized government, which allowed the United Nations to transfer responsibilities for security to Jewish militias after Great Britain relinquished responsibility for the Palestine Mandate.

As in the previous chapter, this chapter begins with the historical background necessary to understand the occupation in general. This is followed by a section analyzing the effects of engagement strategies employed by the British military on stability in Palestine, and then a section analyzing the effects of polices of non-engagement employed from 1945 to 1948 on stability and Britain's ability to govern Palestine. Lastly, the chapter assesses the impact of United Nations policy towards militias in Palestine during the transition to sovereignty on Jewish militias and the establishment of a functioning Israeli government and military.

B.   BACKGROUND

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object…[201]

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[201] Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration,* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1961), 681.

With the end of World War I came responsibility for territories to be divided amongst the victors. Britain recognized the strategic importance of Palestine from a military standpoint and made every effort to ensure that it would not fall into French hands after the war.[202] The Tripartite Sykes-Picot Agreement for the Partition of the Ottoman Empire, negotiated secretly by the Secretary of the British War Cabinet Sir Mark Sykes and the French representative Georges Picot in 1916, established the framework for French and British annexation of "Asiatic portions of the Ottoman Empire" after Allied victory.[203] It provided for French control of Lebanon and Syria, independence for Saudi Arabia and Yemen, British control of Iraq and Trans-Jordan, and international administration of Palestine pending future discussions with the Sherif of Mecca, Russia, and other allies.[204] The British formally occupied Palestine on December 11, 1917 when General Allenby entered Jerusalem, promising to respect and protect all citizens (regardless of religion) under the newly established military government. World War I had left Palestine in ruins. Nearly a quarter of the population had died in battle. Both the Arab and Jewish populations were starving, plague was rampant, and the economy was near collapse.[205]

On November 2, 1917 the Balfour Declaration officially established a Jewish homeland in Palestine, in recognition of the support Allied forces had received from the Jewish diaspora during one of their lowest points in World War I.[206] After the U.S. Congress voted to declare war against Germany on April 6, 1917 that was partially

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[202] Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration,* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1961), 115.

[203] The agreement was in contradiction to official British negotiations with Arab officials in Cairo, which were based on the promise of independence for previously Ottoman controlled territory. Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945,* 3ed. (New York: New World Press, 1970), 53.

[204] Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, 264-267. John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 55-58. Although the secret negotiation of this agreement was rebuked by British statesmen, Arabs and other national governments, it still served as the foundation for British occupation and recognition of Palestine as the Jewish national homeland in the Balfour Declaration.

[205] Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and The Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929,* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 1-3.

[206] John and Hadawi, 69, 78, 79. In 1916, the British had over 300,000 troops immobilized from disease, the military draft was implemented for the first time in British history, and nearly 1.5 million tons of shipping was sunk by German submarines. France was teetering on the brink of collapse; rebellions broke out in Ireland, Italy's political future was bleak, and Russia was on the verge of revolution. At this time, American Jews used their political clout to influence the U.S. decision to enter the war through the promise of establishing a Palestine as a national homeland after the war.

influenced by American Jewish lobbying, the British government issued a Statement of War Aims in the Near East, which listed five points in support of Jewish national objectives that would serve as the basis of the Balfour Declaration.[207]
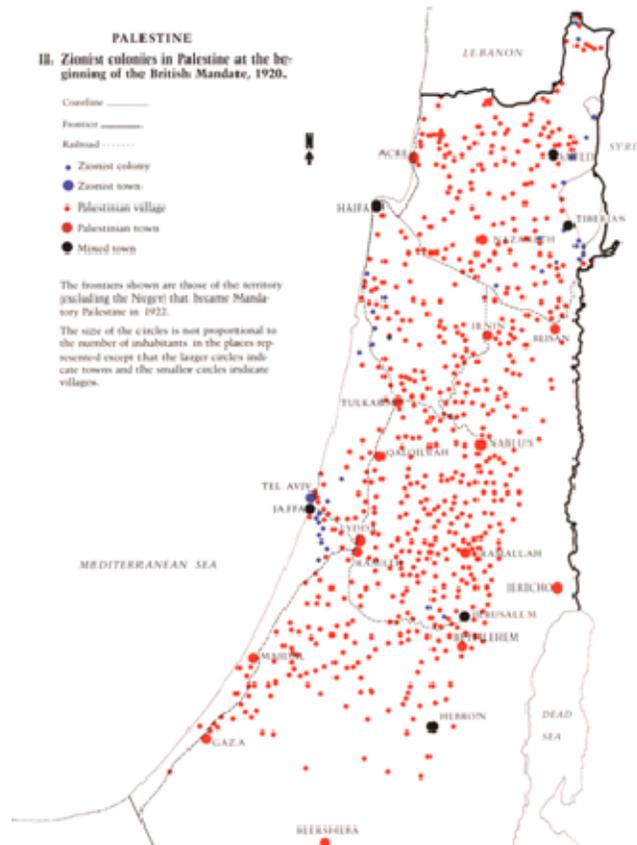
Figure 9.   Demographic Establishment of Palestine in 1920[208]

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[207] John and Hadawi, 78-79. Shortly after this was approved in November 1917, millions of leaflets were dropped via airplanes in Germany, Austria, Poland and Russia. The British Statement of War Aims included: 1) *Basis of Settlement*- Recognition of Palestine as the Jewish National home. 2) *Status of Jewish Population in Palestine generally*- The Jewish population present and future throughout Palestine is to enjoy and possess full national, political, and civic rights. 3) *Immigration into Palestine*- The suzerain government shall grant full and free rights of immigration into Palestine to Jews of all countries. 4) *The Establishment of a Chartered Company*- Authorization of Jewish companies to colonize and develop areas in Palestine not held in private or religious ownership. 5) *Communal Authority*- Full autonomy is to be enjoyed by Jewish communities throughout Palestine in all matters bearing upon their religious or communal welfare or their education.

[208] "Maps - Palestine & Jerusalem," The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, http://www.passia.org/maps.htm (accessed January 4, 2008).

Roughly three years later, on August 10, 1920, Turkey officially ceded its authority over Palestine to the League of Nations. The League then passed sovereign jurisdiction of Palestine to Great Britain in the form of a League of Nations Mandate. [209] By 1920, Arab grievances had percolated over issues such as immigration, land ownership, establishment of a Jewish government, and religious differences. This resulted in a number of violent attacks against the Yishuv (Jewish settlements) with little intervention from thinly spread British security forces. Jews began to realize that they could not rely on the British government or local Arab police to protect them. Thus they began to look to the political arm of the Jewish community for local security.

The Zionist Commission, later know as the Jewish (Executive) Agency, represented the interests of Jewish immigrants Palestine. Established in March 1918 by the Dr. Chaim Weizman, it was designed "to form a link between the British authorities and the Jewish population of Palestine and to help in establishing friendly relations with the Arabs and other non-Jewish communities."[210] However, it was not officially recognized until the League of Nations Mandate of 1922 stated that

> An appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognised as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine, and, subject always to the control of the Administration to assist and take part in the development of the country.[211]

In response to increasing insecurity, the Jewish Agency oversaw the establishment of the Haganah militia in 1920. Haganah would continue operating as a militia force from 1920 to 1948 and as the military arm of the Jewish Agency. The more radical Irgun Zvai Leumi militia broke off from it in 1931, as did the Stern Gang (also known as Lehi and the Stern Group) in 1940. At independence in 1948 Haganah would become the Israeli Defense Force.

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[209] Sumner Welles, *We Need Not Fail,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), 2, 46.

[210] Welles, 24-25.

[211] Ami Isseroff, "Zionism and Israel," Zionism and Israel Information Center, http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Jewish_Agency.htm (accessed December 15, 2007).

The British issued a White Paper in 1922 (the Churchill Memorandum), which reaffirmed the Balfour Declaration while attempting to limit future Jewish immigration and establish a framework for fair representation of the Arab population, culture and language in Palestine. The White Paper was grudgingly accepted by the Jewish Agency in the hope that it would lead Palestinian Arabs to accept the Balfour Declaration. However, Palestinian Arabs did not accept the Declaration, and the White Paper of 1922 then became a source of strain in relations between the Jewish population and the occupying military.[212]

Prior to 1936, there was a limited policy of engagement between Jewish militias and British forces stationed in Palestine. However, Britain would be forced to rely heavily on indigenous security forces in Palestine shortly after their occupation. After World War I, Britain's was thinly spread throughout the Middle East. They faced a massive draw down of military forces while simultaneously acquiring large swaths of terrain that resulted from post-World War I treaties. Since Palestine was just a microcosm of their territorial gains, the British were immediately faced with overcoming a shortage of personnel needed to maintain security between the Arab and Jewish population.

The continued inability of the British government to find a solution that was acceptable to both the Arab and Jewish communities ultimately led to an Arab insurgency that lasted from1936 to 1939. In August 1936 the British government established the Peel Commission to "ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances." In July 1937 it recommended a partition of Palestine between the Arab and Jewish populations.[213] This was rejected by Palestinian Arabs and hotly debated by Jews. Meanwhile, the British government concluded that the financial and administrative difficulties were so great that it could not be implemented.[214] Instead, it issued the MacDonald White Paper in May 1939, limiting Jewish immigration, land ownership and the right to call Palestine

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[212] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism,* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 343,347; John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 181-183.

[213] Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945,* 3ed. (New York: New World Press, 1970), 265, 270.

[214] John and Hadawi, 288.

a national homeland (as it was described in the 1917 Balfour Declaration).[215] This was again rejected by both the Jewish and Arab populations. It also served as a point of contention between British military forces and Jewish militias after 1945. However, the onslaught of World War II in 1939 overshadowed the politics of Palestine. The British were not in the position to enforce the MacDonald White Paper, and the Arab and Jewish communities both realized the need to support Great Britain in defending Palestine against attacks from Axis powers. As a result, by 1941, the British had trained over 16,000 Jewish militiamen to conduct military operations against the Axis powers.[216] When World War II began to wind down in 1944 the British began to experience an increase in attacks throughout Palestine, including the assassination of Lord Moyne, the British Minister of State on November 6, 1944 by the Stern Gang. However, the newly elected British Labour Party continued to endorse the 1939 MacDonald White Paper. This directly impacted the Haganah's decision to unite with the Irgun and Stern Gang in establishing the United Resistance (UR) to resist anti-Jewish policies of the British government in Palestine.   The British continued to maintain policies limiting Jewish immigration. By 1945, there were over 100,000 British soldiers deployed to Palestine, one-tenth of Britain's armed force, at a cost of over 40 million pounds a year. The British military was faced with terrorist attacks conducted by the Jewish militias, especially the Irgun and Stern Gang. This was a period of intense counter insurgency operations consisting of cordon and searches, individual and mass arrests, trials, incarcerations, hangings and even death squads, all of which had absolutely no positive impact on stability.[217]   British policies of non-engagement with the militias led to increased isolation from the population, which led to an increase in attacks against British occupation forces. They also failed to find a solution for peace with the Arab and Jewish communities during the last three years of their occupation. Ultimately this resulted in their failure to maintain control. In 1948, with British casualties increasing, the security situation worsening, and Great Britain unable to achieve an agreement with Palestinian

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[215] John and Hadawi, 315-320.

[216] Ibid., 336.

[217] Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Sword and The Olive: A Critical History of The Israeli Defense Force*, 58-59.

Arabs or Jews, the future of Palestine was turned over to the United Nations. On November 29, 1947 the U.N. voted to partition Palestine. The following day, the British announced their plan for withdrawal from Palestine no later than August 1948. The mandate was officially terminated on May 15, 1948. Immediately following, David Ben-Gurion officially announced the creation of Israel.[218]

1.   1920-1936 Limited Engagement

Engagement of the Jewish militias by the British was limited in scope in this period due to the limited and localized operations of the Haganah militia. British policy vis-à-vis the Haganah militia is succinctly described by Winston Churchill who told Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the Jewish Agency, in July 1921: "we don't mind it, but don't speak of it."[219] Until 1936, officials in Palestine were reluctant to recognize any security element other than British security forces. The considered, but ultimately abandoned, the idea of establishing a mixed defense force, concluding that it would lead to civil war after they witnessed a number of clashes between Arabs and Haganah in May 1921.[220] In addition, the security situation was generally so calm in 1921, that the British were able to drastically reduce the number of soldiers deployed to Palestine from 25,000 to 7,000 during the disturbances of 1921, and then to a garrison of 2,800 and one para-military unit of British Gendarmerie by the end of the year. Control of the forces was also transferred from the British War Office to the Air Ministry at that time. However, by 1926 it had become clear that British defense forces had been reduced so much that they could barely provide security for themselves, let alone the civilian population. Reduced troop levels and continuing unwillingness of British decision-makers to cooperate with Jewish militias led to a major outbreak of violence and instability of 1929.

Established after World War I from a group known as Hashomer (Watchmen), the Haganah evolved as a defense force to protect Jewish settlements in Palestine. Prior to

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[218] Van Creveld, 60, 77. He also assumed the role as the Prime Minister of Israel that same day.

[219] Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929*, Vol. 10 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 136.

[220] Wasserstein, 136-137.

the Arab uprising in 1929 the Haganah consisted of small unorganized pockets of local civilians brought together with the intent of protecting their families and neighborhoods in a relatively stable environment.[221] The Arab uprising of 1929 convinced the Jewish Agency that it needed a more professional security force, since British security forces had been unable to provide adequate protection to the Jewish settlements. At this time Haganah quietly began acquiring military equipment and providing professional training to its volunteers.[222] Ben-Gurion recounts how the Haganah evolved in the face of security threats posed by local Arabs.

> Unlike Hashomer, the Haganah was based not on professional watchmen but on *volunteers* who trained intermittingly and were subject to less strict discipline than was the case in Hashomer. The Haganah groups acted as local defense forces when necessary, rather than as units subordinate to a central authority. As Arab terror increased, the Haganah steadily developed into a more centralized body, with a National Command responsible for the coordination of defense needs on a countrywide basis.[223]

The British response to the initial transformation of the Haganah was slow, not taking form until the second round of violence starting in 1936. From 1929 to 1936 the British remained indecisive with how to engage the Haganah and continued to turn a blind eye towards the formation, training and development of Jewish militias and their need to protect their communities. Since the British were unwilling to engage the Haganah, they were unaware that the creation of a more radical militia, the Irgun Beth, that would later serve as the foundation for the Irgun after their formation in 1937. This evidence suggests that more radical Jewish militias could have either been prevented or marginalized if the British had taken a more active role with the engagement of Jewish militias during this seven year period of Palestinian occupation.

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[221] Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929*, Vol. 10 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 140.

[222] Wasserstein, 159.

[223] David Ben-Gurion, *Israel; A Personal History,* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls; distributed by T. Y. Crowell Co, 1971), 62.

C.   STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

During the occupation the British initially adopted a strategy of engagement vis-à-vis Jewish militias. The following section will examine three periods of cooperation with the Haganah and assess the effects of engagement on stability.   The first period deals with the recognition and endorsement of Jewish militias as a legitimate security apparatus during the Arab insurgency of 1936 to 1939.   The groups that were that were established and supported by the British military were known as the Jewish Settlement Police and Special Night Squads and staffed by members of the Haganah during this time period. The next section examines the effects of Britain's strategy of engagement with the Haganah and their endorsement of a special Jewish military unit known as the Palmach, which was created to reinforce the British military against the threat of invasion during World War II. The last section examines a strategy of cooperation between the British military and Haganah in reducing the threat of violence in the period after the assassination of Lord Moyne in 1944.

1.   Insurgency of 1936-1939

From 1936 to 1939 the Palestinian Arab population began to violently resist and demonstrate against the occupying British military and Yishuv (Jewish community) and against the continuing immigration of Jews into Palestine. The resistance "consisted of a strike including withholding of taxes, of acts of sabotage against British forces, assassination of British officials, murder of Jewish civilians and murder of other Arabs."[224]   In response, the British engaged the Haganah militia to maintain local security. An official local security force known as the Jewish Settlement Police (JSP)

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[224] "Arab Revolt in Palestine," in Zionism and Israel Information Center [database online]. October 16, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Arab_Revolt.htm. John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 253-254, 256. On November 25, 1935, Arab leaders presented four demands to the occupying British government (High Commissioner). First, they wanted to establish a democratic government that would maintain a Palestinian Arab majority. Second, prevent future transfer and sale of Arab lands to Jews. Third, was to immediately halting Jewish immigration until a committee could determine the "absorptive capacity". Additionally, implement legislation to carry identification cards for everyone considered a lawful resident. Lastly was the importance of placing increased investigative emphasis on illegal immigration. However, by January 1936, the British government in London rejected the Palestinian Arab requests and recognized the right for the Jewish community to "make use of all the opportunities" at their disposal.

was established, and trained in techniques of low intensity conflict and counterinsurgency warfare. Since the Haganah were still technically viewed by the British occupation as illegal, establishment of the JSP enabled the British to legally acknowledge the Haganah as local protectorates for Jewish communities The Haganah used the JSP as an informal academy, training over thirteen thousand members between 1936 and 1945, when the JSP was dissolved. The British provided the JSP with a multitude of supplies including weapons, uniforms, and vehicles, and authorized it to control "land around Jewish villages."[225] This engagement facilitated the transformation of Haganah from a local defense force to a capable offensive force. The Jewish Settlement Police were used to conduct mobile and surprise attacks against insurgents in conjunction with the British military.[226] The JSP ranks swelled to over 16,000 by 1940, and were critical in augmenting British security forces while increasing security and stability in Jewish communities.[227]

The policy of co-opting Jewish militias to assume a greater role in performing local security functions was not accepted by everyone in the British military. Many Senior British military officers such as General Archibald Wavell, the commanding general in Palestine were well versed in conventional military tactics that were developed on the linear battlefields of World War I. However, few senior officers were prepared for the complexities of military occupation in Palestine. Part of these complexities involved the integration and cooperation with Jewish militias who were providing much needed security to their settlements. The British security forces in Palestine were far to stretched out to provide legitimate protection to their inhabitants. Yet, they had been unwilling to cooperate and share the burden of security with non-British forces, Jewish militias in particular until the recommendations by officers in the field that faced the Arab

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[225] Mordechai Bar-On, *A Never-Ending Conflict: A Guide to Israeli Military History,* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2004), 27-28.

[226] Sam Katz, *Israeli Units Since 1948,* (London, England: Osprey, 1988), 3.

[227] "The Jewish Virtual Library," in American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise [database online]. Chevy Chase, Maryland October 27, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/anglo10.html. A number of prominent members of the Israeli government and close allies of the US such as Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, and Ariel Sharon served as members of the JSP during this time period.

insurgency of 1936 led to a change in this strategy. Major Orde Wingate, a thirty-three year old military intelligence officer who arrived in Palestine in 1936 persuaded General Archibald Wavell, the Commanding General Officer of Palestine to establish Special Night Squads (SNS) that would be used for counter-insurgency operations.[228] After persistent lobbying of his senior officers Wingate was allowed to study the "modus operandi of…Arab gangs, and in June 1938 he submitted his report, 'Ways of Making His Majesty's Forces Operate at Night with the Objective of Putting an End to the Terror in Northern Palestine.'"[229] This report led to an approval for Wingate to establish the SNS which consisted of forty British infantrymen, four trucks and seventy-five Jewish militiamen (called *notrim*) provided by the Haganah. These squads were created through the integration of British soldiers and the Jewish Settlement Police to perform ambushes that were needed to stop insurgent attacks. The employment of the SNS immediately led to a reduction in violence and criminal activity. Over sixty insurgents were killed in the first month alone and the sabotage of the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipeline which served as a vital economic resource for all of Palestine was drastically reduced.[230] "Arson, deforestation, and the destruction of homes, wells, and pipelines" were limited as well.[231] Unfortunately, the policy of cooperation between Jewish militias and British forces came with a price paid in blood. From 1936 to1939 there were 620 British and 2,394 Jewish casualties compared to 3,764 insurgents which was relatively low since British troop levels hovered around 50,000.[232]

The Special Night Squads and Jewish Settlement Police were able to achieve greater tactical flexibility compared to the British military, which is an extensive

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[228] John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 274.

[229] Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), 39.

[230] Van Creveld, 40; *Moshe Dayan* (London; New York, NY: Weidenfeld & Nicolson; Distributed in the United States by Sterling Publ., 2004), 46.

[231] Frank Gervasi, *The Case For Israel,* (New York: Viking Press, 1967), 52.

[232] Michael Joseph Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 74; Ghassan Kanafani, "1936-1939 Revolt in Palestine," Committee for Democratic Palestine, http://www.newjerseysolidarity.org/resources/kanafani/kanafani4e.html (accessed December 14, 2007); Ami Isseroff, "Arab Revolt/Great Arab Uprising in Palestine," Zionism and Israel Information Center, http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Arab_Revolt.htm (accessed October 16, 2007).

bureaucratic organization. The training for Jewish militias was tactically focused at the squadron, company and platoon level. Militia commanders complimented the British military structure very well through their capabilities to improvise and conduct independent operations while attached to formal militia hierarchy. The guerilla attacks employed by Arab dissidents called for a militia to act "independently, quickly, and decisively while demonstrating a high level of flexibility;" characteristics not consistent with standard operating procedures within the British Army.[233]

Unfortunately, General Haining, who replaced General Wavell as the commanding general of Palestine in 1938 "not only had reservations about the wisdom of the SNS policy" since it was in conflict with a questionable British policy of avoiding actions that could exacerbate tensions between Jews and Arabs, but also "had doubts about allowing a junior officer such independence of the general command."[234] He decided to forego further integration of British and Jewish forces in favor of a policy a massive intervention of British troops, and the SNS was dissolved in May 1939. Although the addition of more British troops did restore order temporarily, it did not restore reliable local security, especially after the departure of these extra troops. Senior officers made sure that Wingate "was prohibited from going to Palestine for any reason whatever, either on duty or on leave."[235] Wingate continued to lobby for greater cooperation between British security forces and the Jewish military. He even appealed to Winston Churchill for the establishment of a Jewish Army. This was denied by the British Colonial Office, but his appeals were instrumental in the continued training of the

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[233] Tal, *Between Intuition and Professionalism: Israeli Military Leadership during the 1948 Palestine War*, 888-889. William Roger Louis et al., *The Oxford History of the British Empire,* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 193. The British would also later benefit militarily by utilizing Jewish militias in this capacity. The Special Night Squads can also be attributed as the pre-cursor to British Special Forces and creating the elite British Special Air Service Regiments.

[234] Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 3rd ed. (New York: New World Press, 1970), 283.; Van Creveld, Martin L., *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force*, 40 The integration of Wingate's strategy also had long-term benefits for the Haganah who adopted his doctrinal concepts into what later become the Haganah's mobile strike force known as the Plugot Sadeh, (the Palmach) while also serving as a benchmark for the Israeli Defense Force.

[235] John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 335.

JSP "which numbered nearly 16,000 by 1941" and proved to be vital in providing much needed protection that over-stretched British security forces were unable to provide.[236]

2.   The Palmach

Despite the tensions created between the British and the Jewish community by the Macdonald White Paper, they would again seek, and receive, the assistance of Jewish militias in 1941, this time for national rather than local security. In 1940 German occupation of Palestine was a real possibility. British forces in Palestine were not prepared or capable of repelling a German attack, and feared that Palestinian Arabs would welcome German troops in an effort to undermine the British occupation and Jewish Yishuv. So the British again turned to Jewish militias for support. In 1941 "Cooperation" was established between the militias and British military and was aimed at defeating an attack by German-Italian armies invading Palestine. This agreement allowed for the Jewish militias to establish an elite striking force known as the *Plugot Mahatz*, or Palmach. "Cooperation" allowed Jewish militias to fully invest in the recruitment, training and funding for the Palmach, which would later deploy with British forces to combat Axis power on multiple fronts.[237] Five examples highlight the success of this strategy of with a local militia.

The first engagement cost the lives of 23 Palmach fighters and one British officer on May 18, 1941, all of whom perished at sea enroute to sabotaging oil refineries in Syria to prevent them from being used by Axis powers. However, the British were so impressed with the discipline, readiness, and capabilities of the Palmach that they were integrated into the planning of small unit tactics of sabotage, sniper, ambush and patrol operations, which were to be deployed if the Germans invaded Palestine. The British provided sabotage and communication training in conjunction with naval and land military training conducted by the Haganah. The second engagement occurred on June 7,

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[236] John and Hadawi, 336.

[237] "Palmach: The Elite Striking Force of the Haganah," in Israeli Ministry of Defense [database online]. Kiryat-Ono, Israel October 18, 2007 [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.palmach.org.il/show_item.asp?itemId=8570&levelId=42859&itemType=0 (accessed October 18, 2007).

1941 and consisted of Palmach fighters serving in critical roles alongside Australian vanguards during the attack of Syria and Lebanon. The Palmach fighters were broken down into thirteen different teams tasked for dangerous missions that included disrupting communication, seizure of key terrain and routes, and serving as lead navigators for Allied armies behind enemy lines. Palmach operations would continue in Syria and Lebanon until March 1943 and consisted of missions that involved gathering intelligence, disseminating propaganda and disrupting key infrastructure. The fourth example is the establishment of the Mishmar Ha'emek training camp, which was run jointly by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Haganah leadership. The camp was specifically designed to train Palmach fighters in patrolling, sniper operations, and sabotage. The British provided trainers, financial support, maintenance assistance and food. By the conclusion of training in June 1942, nearly 1100 Palmach fighters were jointly trained by British military and Haganah militiamen. This served as a critical foundation for the professional Palmach force. The fifth example encompasses a plan between the British military and Haganah called the Northern Plan. By June 1942 the Axis powers were threatening to overrun British forces near Egypt. The plan entailed supporting the British retreat from Palestine while consolidating Jewish communities in mountainous and dense housing in Haifa, Mount Carmel, the Bay of Haifa and part of the Zvulun Valley. Once consolidated the Jewish fighters would be required to repel Axis attacks until the British military was able to regroup and move back to Palestine to reinforce the Jewish militias.[238]

In sum, the engagement strategy that the British military used with the Palmach demonstrates that engagement can succeed in traditional military operations at the national level as well as in community defense at the local level. However, the British failed to capitalize on what they had initiated. Once the threat of Axis occupation receded, the British military strategy of engagement receded as well. Additionally, the British government's policy of uphold the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 would

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[238] "Palmach: The Elite Striking Force of the Haganah," in Israeli Ministry of Defense [database online]. Kiryat-Ono, Israel [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.palmach.org.il/show_item.asp?itemId=8570&levelId=42859&itemType=0 (accessed October 18, 2007).

undermine the willingness of the Jewish militias to cooperate with British forces absent the threat of Nazi Germany. Indeed, the Haganah went underground in 1945 and began movement of resistance against the British. The British response was an ultimately unsuccessful strategy of defeating Haganah and the other Jewish militias.

3. The Season

The Jewish Agency and the Haganah made an effort to maintain a diplomatic relationship with the British after the announcement of the MacDonald White Paper in 1939. However, the Irgun and Stern Gang militias were always more inclined to oppose the British occupation. This inclination to resist was held in check until the outcome of World War II began to be clear. Then, on February 1, 1944, the Irgun and Stern Gang formally announced a revolt against British, calling upon the Jewish community to rise against the tyranny of the British occupation. The Haganah continued its policy of facilitating British defeat of Nazi Germany by standing down. It opposed resistance by the more radical groups on those grounds, as well as out of concern that the resistance would undermine important vestiges of support for the Jewish state from powerful British leaders, such as Winston Churchill. From February to September 1944 Irgun and the Stern Gang bombed immigration offices, British tax offices, intelligence and police buildings (which were highly fortified), seized a government broadcasting station, and assassinated a number of British policemen.[239] Haganah threw its support behind British efforts to contain the more radical militias. In September 1944, Moshe Sneh, the commander of Haganah along with another Haganah leader, Eliyahu Golomb, participated in two meetings with Menahem Begin, the leader of the Irgun. The Haganah commanders told Begin that the actions of the Irgun and Stern Gang were not sanctioned by the Jewish community, Haganah or the Jewish Agency, and ordered him to cease the attacks immediately or face civil war and military elimination.[240] Begin attempted to dissuade the Haganah leaders for two months from attacking a fellow Jewish militia, but

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[239] John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, 1914-1945*, 360.

[240] "The Irgun Site," in The Jabotinsky Institute [database online]. [cited 2007]. Available from http://www.etzel.org.il/english/index.html (accessed August 14, 2007).

the assassination of Lord Moyne by members of the Stern Gang resulted in immediate offensive actions by Haganah against both the Stern Gang and the Irgun.

Moyne's assassination in Cairo on November 6, 1944 dealt a major blow to ongoing negotiations between British and the Haganah over their possible integration as a legitimate security force in conjunction with the British occupation. Soon after the assassination, Winston Churchill proclaimed: "If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future are to produce a new set of gangsters…many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past."[241] The Haganah also immediately condemned the assassination and produced a plan, which involved the collaboration with British police and military, to capture members of the Irgun and Stern Gang. The Haganah's intelligence branch, the Shai, amassed over 250 names, and the Palmach was employed to kidnap suspects and turn them over to British authorities. The Jewish Agency also established a Department of Special Assignments designed to cooperate with the British Intelligence in collecting information on suspected Irgun members. The Season drew to a close in March 1945, when the Haganah abandoned the kidnapping of Irgun and Stern Gang members in response to condemnation by the Jewish community. Joint British-Haganah operations of the Hunting Season resulted in the detention of over 1,000 suspected members with hundreds deported to detention camps in Africa, while severely limiting offensive operations of the Irgun and Stern Gang. This resulted in seven months of increased security and stability. [242] However they did not eliminate the more radical militias.

D.   STRATEGY OF NON-ENGAGEMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON STABILITY

Britain's Labour party, having won in the 1945 elections committed to allowing holocaust survivors to immigrate to Palestine without delay, reneged on its promises after assuming power. This decision constituted a de facto abandonment of the British strategy

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[241] John and Hadawi, 362.

[242] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site,* 20.

of engagement with militias and resulted in an immediate shift by the Haganah from a strategy of cooperation to resistance. Additionally, the Labour Party's decision indirectly supported the Irgun and Stern Gang's more radical vision of resisting British occupation by changing the public's perception of the two militias from "blood thirsty terrorist to persecuted martyr, betrayed by his brother Jew to the iniquitous British" less than six months after the execution of the Season.[243] The decision to renege on their promises to the Jews in Palestine would result in greater insecurity, an unsustainable rise in British troop levels, and escalating costs.

In the fall of 1945 the Haganah entered into an agreement with the Irgun and Stern Gang to conduct offensive operations against the British occupation. By October 1945 the negotiations with the Irgun and the Stern Gang were complete and the United Resistance (UR) was formed.[244] The UR was committed to winning Israeli independence by military means. As Begin states in *The Revolt*, the strategic intent of military action "was to raise the political and military costs of the continued British presence sufficiently to persuade them to quit."[245] Coordinated attacks began on November 1, 1945 in an operation called the "Night of the Trains," which involved an attack on a major railway station by a joint Irgun-Stern Gang unit and the destruction of 153 different areas of rail and two patrol launches in the ports of Jaffa and Haifa.[246] The next combined attack occurred in late 1945 when a joint Irgun-Stern Gang militia bypassed British security and emplaced explosive charges that demolished the British Intelligence office building, killing seven policemen. The British Police and Intelligence Service district headquarters

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[243] Cohen, 71.

[244] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site*. Negotiations with the Irgun and Stern Gang (Lehi) are listed as: 1) The Haganah organization officially entered into a military struggle against the British. 2) The Irgun and Lehi will not implement combat plans without prior approval from the United Resistance command. 3) The Irgun and Lehi will only carry out combat missions assigned to them by the United Resistance command. 4) No need for formal discussion while proposing operations. Representatives of each organization will meet regularly and discuss plans from a political and practical view point. 5) Upon approval of operations, experts from each group will discuss the details. 6) Arms acquisition does not need prior approval from the UR. 7) The agreement between each group is based on positive precepts. 8) If the Haganah is ordered to abandon their military struggle against the British, the Irgun and Lehi will continue to fight.

[245] Ian F. W. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq: A Historical Perspective* (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College, January 2005).

[246] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site*.

in Jaffa was also destroyed, and a British army camp in Tel Aviv was attacked by the Irgun.[247] The UR coordinated its next attack against the airfields in Palestine in February, 1946. The "Night of the Airfields" consisted of a joint Irgun-Stern Gang attack on two airfields approximately seven kilometers apart. Despite robust British security measures, UR coordination and detailed planning prevented the British from responding from their barracks across the street with suppressive fire. This resulted in the loss of nearly twenty British military aircraft. The Haganah conducted offensive operations against targets related to immigration, as it had in the past, but now also targeted British police and military. In February 1946 it raided the mobile police force in three different locations, as well as coast guard stations and radar installations. The Irgun staged its largest attack, targeting the southern railway network while the Stern Gang attacked an important bridge along a British resupply route south of the town of Acre on April 2. 1946. The Irgun was successful in immobilizing the railway network and blowing up the bridges. Although 31 Irgun militiamen, including respected commanders, were arrested, its ability to conduct a large scale operation was recognized by local and international media.[248] This attack was compounded by one of the largest (and the last) Haganah attacks against the British infrastructure on June 17, 1945. In the "Night of the Bridges," the Haganah's elite Palmach units were stationed in each of four cardinal locations of the country. Eleven bridges linking Palestine to surrounding countries were destroyed, effectively cutting off the British from ground reinforcements.

The British were faced with a paradox of sorts. Although they needed to defeat the militias' resistance to the occupation, they also needed to sustain the militias' role as local security providers since they did not have the support of the British population or the military capability to sustain the current force levels for much longer. Therefore they responded to the UR offensive by implementing a countrywide curfew and capturing over 100 militiamen, killing four and wounding 18 as a precursor to their largest operation which nearly brought the United Resistance to a standstill. The British military felt that a major military operation was needed to "break the military strength of the Yishuv [Jewish

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[247] Lapidot.

[248] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site*.

community], the elite Palmach Force of the Haganah, and to stifle the activist leaders, in order, it was hoped, to pave the way for moderate leaders who would be willing to cooperate with the [British Mandate]."[249] By targeting the Palmach specifically, the British hoped that the Haganah would recognize that a military operation was intended to stop offensive actions of the militia and not the Haganah's tradition role as a self defense force.   In Operation Agatha, approximately 17,000 British participated in a two week cordon and search military operation throughout Palestine. They arrested over 2,700 people and confiscated massive amounts of documents, plans, weapons, and materiel from multiple locations. This also enabled British authorities to officially link David Ben-Gurion and the Jewish Agency to the military activities of the UR militia.[250] Unfortunately, the military operation did not achieve the intended effects that the British military desired.

In response to Operation Agatha, the UR bombed the British government offices in the left wing of the King David Hotel, killing 28 Britons, 41 Arabs, 17 Jews, and five others – all civilians.[251] The large number of casualties was unexpected.   Irgun stated that they had warned the British, the French consulate across the street, and the *Palestine Post* prior to the detonation. Although the bombing of the King David Hotel was successful, the resort to terrorist tactics shocked the Jewish community and its leadership, and undermined support for the UR. Even though the Haganah was involved in the planning of the bombing as a response to Operation Agatha, the Irgun accepted full responsibility at the request of the Haganah due to the condemnation by David Ben-Gurion, other leaders of the Jewish Agency, and British population and Jewish community. The Irgun issued a statement a year later attempting to highlight the truth of the matter, however it had no effect and they were still strongly condemned by the British and Hebrew press.[252] As a result of the bombing, moderates in the Jewish Agency Executive gained enough strength to abolish the UR on August 5, 1946, after ten months

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[249] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site*.

[250] Lapidot.

[251] Ibid.

[252] To this day controversy surrounds the role that the Haganah had with involvement in the King David Hotel bombing.

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of synchronized operations between the Haganah, Irgun, and Stern Gang. The Irgun and Stern Gang continued to conduct military operations on their own, while the Haganah returned to supporting Jewish immigration and reinvigorated its earlier efforts to establish a Jewish state through diplomacy with Great Britain.[253]

The British response to the tragedy was less than successful. They were faced with two options. First was the possibility of conducting "large scale arms searches" similar to Operation Agatha. However, they realized that Operation Agatha failed to produce any tangible results against the UR and even helped them with pursing a decision to bomb the King David hotel. They also felt that there would be a secondary effect of pushing Palestine over the edge into an all-out state of war which Great Britain was incapable of providing the large numbers of troops and equipment needed to maintain security in Palestine. The 80,000 troops that were currently deployed to Palestine represented eight percent of their force structure and had placed increased strain on the already battered, post World War military.[254] Therefore the British were left with implementing a myopic political solution that demoralized troops through the imposed military restriction while resentment for the British occupation increased. General Sir Evelyn Barker, British Army Commander in Palestine issued an anti-Semitic letter intended "to punish Jews in a way the race dislikes as any by striking at their pockets and showing our contempt for them" by ordering "all Jewish places of entertainment, restaurants, shops and Jewish homes off-limits to British troops.[255] After the letter was intercepted by the Irgun, it was made public immediately which assisted with countering

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[253] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site*. Peeke, *Jewish--Zionist Terrorism and the Establishment of Israel,* 60. The use of Jewish propaganda was an extremely powerful tool in the days following a militia attack. Whether exploiting the retaliatory speeches of the British military or characterizing the Jewish attacks as self-defense, the Haganah propaganda element was always able to maintain the support of the Jewish population, which gave the militias safe haven. The "Voice of Israel" radio broadcast exaggerated the retaliatory actions of the British military. For example, after the King David hotel bombing, the Irgun intercepted a letter from Lieutenant General Sir Evelyn Barker ordering everything having to do with the Yishuv "out of bounds for all British officers and soldiers."[253] He concluded his questionable letter by stating, "The aim of these orders is to punish the Jews in a way the race dislikes as much as any, namely by striking at their pockets." Although the British rescinded the letter two weeks later, it was too late to resuscitate the British involvement in Palestine.

[254] Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948*, 74, 92.

[255] Lapidot, *The Irgun Site*, 20; Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948*, 94.

the damage done by the King David Hotel bombing and also "helped transform British security forces into even more of a resentful and hated enemy occupation force."[256]

Thus, from June 1946, the militias employed a two track strategy. Haganah pursued the political track, with pressure for compromise from Britain being applied by the Irgun and Stern Gang on the military track. Begin, the Irgun leader, saw a direct correlation between his attacks and British concessions. In December 1946, two Irgun militiamen sentenced to prison were lashed on their backs as part of the sentence. Begin responded publicly by warning the British that "you will not whip Jews in their homeland. And if British authorities whip them, then British officers will be whipped publicly in return."[257] The following day, a British major and three NCOs received retaliatory lashes. After twenty-five years of protests by the Jewish Agency, lashes were suddenly eliminated in Palestine. Similarly, after three Stern Group militiamen were executed at the Acre prison in July 1947, the Irgun responded by hanging two British sergeants, creating a spiral of violence between the Jewish militias and the British occupation forces, who felt trapped by British policies that prevented more offensive operations. After the two sergeants were hanged, British soldiers and policemen vandalized Jewish businesses and houses, but were met by groups of young militiamen with stones and fists. Vigilante reprisals signaled that the British had nearly lost control, which met the exact goals of the Irgun: to make Palestine ungovernable for the British. In retrospect, the hanging of the sergeants served as one of the strongest signals for British departure from Palestine. In the words of the Chief Secretary of the British Government in Palestine, Colonel Archer-Cust, "The hangings of the two British sergeants did more than anything to get us out of Palestine."[258]

British security forces were left in a precarious position as a result of the British Labour Party's decision to renege on British commitments to the Jewish state since they were forced to uphold a political policy that was diametrically opposed the Jewish militia

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[256] Lapidot, 94.

[257] Peeke, *Jewish--Zionist Terrorism and the Establishment of Israel*, 62.

[258] Peeke, 69; Michael Joseph Cohen, *Palestine and The Great Powers, 1945-1948,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 251.

vision. The military strategy of engagement with the militias was effectively undermined by this policy decision. As a result, they were forced to increase troop levels to from 50,000 to 80,000 in the last three months of 1945 intended to fight Jewish immigration, reduce violence by marginalizing the UR and reestablish order by exhibiting a greater visual presence. This troop increase proved insufficient and an additional 20,000 troops were deployed, bringing the total to 100,000, or ten percent of their total force. This further strained an already exhausted forced that had returned from fighting Nazi Germany less than a year before and was now required to fulfill a three year obligation in Palestine. For example, the Sixth Airborne Division participated in the beach landings at Normandy on June 6, 1944 and continued to fight Axis powers in both Europe and the Far East for the next year, and was then deployed to Palestine less than six months after World War II.[259]

Unfortunately, the strategy that spelled victory in World War II paradoxically led to withdrawal in Palestine. The British strategic policy of limiting Jewish immigration resulted in so-called tactical victories included the "repeated spectacle of immigrants, many of them former concentration camp inmates with numbers still tattooed on their arms, being manhandled, wounded, and sometimes killed by troops who sought to transfer them to prison camps," which led to a global public relations disaster.[260] Even more damaging was the demoralization of British troops after Winston Churchill accused them of "not knowing how to behave like men."[261] Over 170 operations similar to Agatha were conducted, with "25 percent bringing no results at all and only exposing troops to false accusations of brutality or looting."[262] Ultimately, the British strategy of non-engagement put them in a position were they were "damned if they 'lost' and twice damned if, as usually happened, they 'won' and 'succeeded' in restoring order, arresting

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[259] Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948*, 74, 95.

[260] Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force*, 61.

[261] Van Creveld, 62.

[262] Ian F. W. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq: A Historical Perspective* (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College, January 2005), 12.

suspects, and even stopping immigrants from reaching their destination."[263] The British
military was not trained to conduct what were essentially policing operations, and tended
therefore to use conventional military tactics that were inappropriate and thus produced
tactical successes that were strategic failures.

During the last three years of occupation, British security forces placed greater
emphasis on operations designed to stop militia violence against them than to provide
local security to the Yishuv (Jewish communities). Therefore, it became incumbent upon
the Haganah to ensure their communities were protected. The leader of the Jewish
Agency, Ben-Gurion divided the militia accordingly. While the Haganah continued to
serve as a local self-defense force for Jewish neighborhoods, the Palmach, the elite unit
within the Haganah continued to perform offensive operations aimed at disrupting British
security forces that interfered with the flow of Jewish immigrants into Palestine.

The Jewish militias placed a much greater emphasis on providing local security for
themselves after the British dissolved policies of engagement were essentially abandoned
after the election of the British Labour Party in the fall of 1945. This led their unparalleled
support by the Yishuv (Jewish community) British security forces could no longer be trusted.
Thus the Jewish Agency immediately enacted a policy of conscription for all "Jewish senior
school children aged 17-18" whereas before it was optional for teenagers who had either
completed or left school.[264] These measures forced a much closer relationship with Jewish
communities and their militias that actually resulted in a period where there were no major
incidents of violence until the November 30, 1947, when the UN voted to partition Palestine.
The vote was immediately followed with bouts of chaotic uprisings by the Arab community.
In response to David Ben-Gurion's assertion that British security forces failed to "prevent
Arab incursions from neighboring states and, on occasion, of having prevented the Haganah
from coming to the aid of Jews under attack," British officials stating that "Arabs had been

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[263] Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force*,
62.

[264] Mitchell G. Bard, "The Jewish Virtual Library," American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise,
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/anglo10.html2007) (accessed October 28, 2007).

provoked by Jewish celebrations."[265] The lack of engagement ironically prepared the Haganah to succeed in what would escalate in to a full-blown civil war with the Arabs after the British occupation.

It was also clear that the British did not have enough troops, equipment, and political support to sustain their presence, and further troop increases were not possible. The United Nations recommendation, in late 1947, to partition the country was unacceptable to the Arab population, causing further violence, which the British were unable to quell now that they had abandoned the strategy of engagement with the Jewish militias.   Thus, on December 11, 1947, the British announced the withdrawal of its forces and termination of its mandate in Palestine.[266] In 1948, the Jewish Agency led by Ben-Gurion began to assume responsibility for the future Israeli government. As the British departed, the Haganah filled the security and governance voids, while dismantling the Irgun and Stern Gang. The Haganah military strategy shifted in preparation for the impending battles against Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding countries sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. The change from low-level, small units mounting surprise attacks to more conventional, larger scale attack capabilities coincided with the transition from a militia force designed to defend the Yishuv to the Israeli Defense Force, which officially occurred on May 26, 1948.

E.   THE UNITED NATION STRATEGY OF ENGAGEMENT

Between December 1947, when Britain announced that the termination of its Mandate of Palestine and May 1948 when it was to redeploy its troops, the United Nations Palestine Commission had to identify and implement an end state for Palestine. It concluded that the best solution was a partitioning the country between the Palestinian Arabs and the Jews. Recognizing the success of the Jewish militias over the previous twenty years, the U.N. elected to employ indigenous militia forces as the primary security element for both new states.   On January 10, 1948, the U.N. published its report A/AC.21/W.9 outlining the responsibilities:

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[265] Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948*, 302.

[266] Peeke, *Jewish--Zionist Terrorism and the Establishment of Israel*, 292-300.

B.8. The Provisional Council of Government of each State shall, within the shortest time possible, recruit an armed militia from the residents of the state, sufficient in number to maintain internal order and to prevent frontier clashes.

This armed militia is each State shall, for operational purposes be under the command of Jewish or Arab officers resident in that State, but general political and military control including the choice of the militias high command, shall be exercised by the Commission.[267]

The British military was to "maintain law and order in the areas they had not yet evacuated" until such time as they were withdrawn.[268]

The UN vision for security provision by militias was outlines by the Ralph Bunche, chairman of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP):

Something like that of the "Home Guard" in the United Kingdom, an armed force raised from the people in order to defend some villages, to defend their land and to supply something that is between an army and the police….but capable of dealing with large-scale internal disturbances and preventing frontier clashes and border attacks. On these assumptions the successful execution by the armed militia of its tasks would require that it be a mobile force possessing sufficient equipment and training to enable it to defend the borders of each state and to cope with widespread disorders, guerilla attacks by organized bands and sabotage of public utilities. In addition, it would be required to maintain proper control of disturbed areas, to protect life and property, to ensure the continued operation of essential public utilities, and safe communication and transport facilities.[269]

The intent of this guidance was to allow Jewish militias to legally assume control of multiple security requirements that were no longer accepted by the British occupation, and which they had already successfully conducted in a clandestine form. The British occupation of Palestine had required a static force that ranged from 60,000 to 100,000 soldiers, "two divisions, an armoured brigade and air force units [and a] … police force

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[267] Ralph Bunche, *Future Government of Palestine/UN Commission-Armed Militias-Working Paper,* United Nations, 1948), 1.

[268] Bunche, 2.

[269] Ibid., 2-3.

totaling some 32,000" personnel.[270] The estimated strength of the Haganah in 1948 was 40,000; the Jewish Settlement Police was approximately 16,000; the Palmach approximately 6,000; the Irgun ranged from 3,000 to 5,000; and the Stern Gang ranged between 200 and 300.[271] However, it was already clear that the Haganah would absorb the Irgun and Stern Gang as a means of eliminating their radical activities that would possibly shift from attacking British forces to Palestinian Arabs. In sum the U.N. recognized that the Jewish militias, with an estimated operating strength of nearly 66,000 personnel who had been trained both legally and illegally during British occupation in all the tasks described in the General Assembly's resolution, were capable of assuming security responsibilities. In so doing, the Jewish militias allowed the British to completely withdraw their forces from Palestine while maintaining the security of the Jewish population. The UN's support for militias directly impacted the ability of the Jewish Agency and the Haganah establish a functional and professional standing army, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) on May 28, 1948. The IDF was also successful in dissolving the more radical Irgun and Stern Gang and absorbing their members into the IDF.[272]

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[270] Bunche, 3.

[271] Ralph Bunche, *Future Government of Palestine/UN Commission-Armed Militias-Working Paper,* United Nations, 1948), 4.

[272] Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force*, 81.
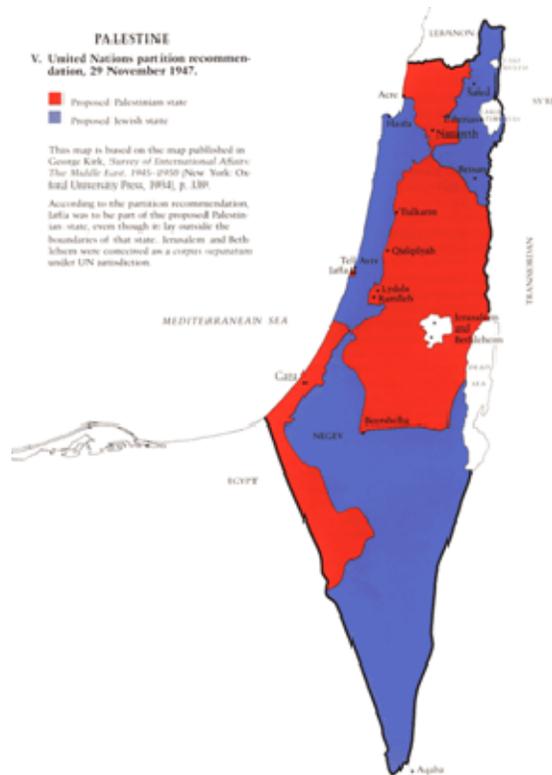
Figure 10.   1947 United Nations Partition Plan of Palestine[273]

F.   CONCLUSION

Despite the British forces' failed effort to defeat the Jewish militias in the years immediately preceding Israeli independence, the military strategy of engaging local militia forces to work in conjunction with the occupying military between 1936 and 1945 ultimately produced security forces to which British forces could hand responsibility for local and national security. This allowed the occupying military to reduce its footprint as the local militia forces gain in strength and responsibility. The Balfour Declaration committed the British government to a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which tended to reinforce the tactical strategy of engagement toward Jewish militias by the British military, at least until the de facto rejection of the principles of the Balfour Declaration by the Labour government in 1945. Nevertheless, the relationship between the British

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[273] "Maps - Palestine & Jerusalem," The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, http://www.passia.org/maps.htm (accessed January 4, 2008).

military and the militias was always complex. Despite its refusal to recognize the Haganah officially, the British military realized its importance in providing security to the Jewish community; something that the British military was not always able to achieve. Therefore, the description of the Haganah as "a semi-illegal underground militia with a limited operational spectrum and organizational structure" was vague enough for the British military to employ the Haganah when they were overwhelmed *and* to call for its dissolution when it was no longer needed.[274] Thus, Haganah did not emerge as a capable, disciplined, fighting force because of overwhelming support from the British occupation forces. Rather, it was to the advantage of British military strategies of acceptance and engagement employed by the British military to make itself into such a force. As a result, the Jewish militias were able to force the withdrawal of British forces *and* establish a legitimate national defense force based on its long term strategy of community protection. On the other hand, the Labour Party government's decision to abandon engagement with militias and instead seek their defeat required it to increase troop levels to quell the rising levels of instability, which ultimately led to the decision to relinquish authority of Palestine to the United Nations. The United Nations then reversed course, endorsing the use of militias as a legitimate security force. The transformation of the Haganah into the Israeli Defense Force clearly shows that militias can evolve into a functional state security apparatus, under the right circumstances.

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[274] David Tal, "Between Intuition and Professionalism: Israeli Military Leadership during the 1948 Palestine War," *The Journal of Military History* 68.3 (2004): 888.

IV.   CONCLUSION

The United States strategy towards militias in Iraq has been similar to the British strategy towards Jewish militias in Palestine from 1920-1947. It has vacillated from one of disregard to one of dissolution to one of denial. As Peter Galbraith pointed out, the Iraq strategy has faltered because "they are being made up as they go along, without the benefit of planning, adequate knowledge of the country, or the experience of comparable situations."[275]   The British government and military also disagreed regarding the best approach to dealing with militias in Palestine. The British government recognized the futility of employing a violent military solution to a political problem, whereas the military felt the use of overwhelming firepower was justified and necessary to defeat intransigent Jewish militias conducting guerrilla style attacks.

Since post-invasion operations began in Iraq, the U.S. has emphasized a strategy of non-engagement towards militias with the ultimate hope of eliminating them in favor of the newly formed Iraq security forces. This was underlined by Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91 which made militias illegal. However closer examination of the U.S. relationships with Kurdish, Sunni and Shia militias reveal a biased approach toward engagement.   The U.S. has employed a strategy of engagement and has always maintained a positive relationship with the Kurdish Peshmerga, even prior to the invasion in 2003.   U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Sunni militias suddenly changed from defeat to engagement in 2006. Thus, only in regard to the Shia militia has the U.S. actually implemented a strategic policy of non-engagement, often failing to distinguish Shia militias from insurgents.   This ethnically biased military strategy towards militias threatens the U.S. position as liberator of all Iraqis, and may make it more difficult to engage Shia militias if and when U.S. decision-makers decide to adopt a consistent strategy of engagement and cooperation.

The evidence presented here clearly calls for such a comprehensive strategy. Engagement with Kurdish Peshmerga has led to stability and the transformation of the

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[275] Peter Galbraith, "How to Get Out of Iraq," *New York Review of Books* 15, no. 8 (2004), 4.

militias into an effective security force, as government security forces continue to mature. In the Anbar province, U.S. military forces adopted a similar strategy in 2006 that began with the engagement of local sheiks and led to the employment of their militias to perform local security responsibilities alongside U.S. and Iraq security forces. These engagements also led to an improved police force, due to an increase in recruits whom the locals trusted. Improved cooperation between U.S. military, police and Sunni militias has made Anbar province one of safest areas in Iraq in 2007 after being considered by senior military officials as the most contentious area of Iraq in 2006. However the U.S. remains committed to a non-engagement strategy vis-à-vis Shia militias. And Moqtada al Sadr's Mahdi Militia has continued to defy the occupation of Iraq by the U.S. The evidence presented here suggests that isolation of the Mahdi Militia has and will continue to create greater instability for two reasons. First, over the last three years, the U.S. military tactics aimed at defeating the Mahdi Militia through targeted raids against militia commanders has led to the unintended consequence of creating a power vacuum that has been filled by criminal's intent upon making a personal profit regardless of how it will negatively impact the community. This evidence also suggests that local communities suffer the consequences of reduced security because the nascent Iraqi security forces are still in the developmental stage and have yet to assume an independent role as a trusted security provider. Therefore U.S. forces have been required to fill the role of security provider, leading to the troop surge of 2007. However, U.S. planners have continuously recognized the inability of U.S. forces to sustain the troop surge beyond 2008. They are at the breaking point. It is unknown how much longer U.S. soldiers will be willing to redeploy to Iraq for their fourth, fifth, or sixth deployment that ranges from twelve to fifteen months. Therefore, this strategy has the potential to create another power vacuum if Iraqi security forces have not demonstrated the ability to assume an independent role as sole security provider by then.

The second problem resulting from the lack of engagement with Shia militias is the lack of oversight. The evidence suggests that this has allowed an uninterrupted line of communication with other external actors that were willing to engage them. Iran gladly accepted the role, co-opting as many Shia militias as possible and providing them

with training, funding, and equipment, which ironically has been used lethally to disrupt U.S. military operations in Iraq. However, the likelihood of Shia militias turning to Iran and then attacking U.S. forces would have been lower if U.S. policy-makers had adopted a much more aggressive policy towards engaging moderate militia members and including them into the overall security plan after the ceasefire in October 2004. The good news is that recent experience in Anbar Province suggests that it is still not too late to change course. Sadr's efforts to rehabilitate the Mahdi Militia during a six month cessation of attacks and General Petraeus' encouraging response to Sadr's decision also suggests that Shia militias would be willing to cooperate with the United States. However, the likelihood of Shia militias turning away from Iranian sponsors much the same way Sunni militias were inclined to turn away from al Qaeda will be greater if the incentives offered by the U.S. and Iraqi government were right for an alliance of convenience.

A.   THE BRITISH IN PALESTINE: A WAY FORWARD?

The British experience in Palestine was strikingly similar to the U.S. experience in Iraq. When studied chronologically the British strategy was virtually opposite that of the U.S. From 1920 to 1936 the British strategy towards Jewish militias was rather complacent. However, an Arab insurgency that began to foment in 1936 led military officials to pursue a strategy of engagement with militias through the establishment of constabulary forces known as the Jewish Settlement Police. Serving alongside the British security forces, these forces were critical to the restoration of order by 1939 *without* the need for additional British military forces. Although the White Paper of 1939 could have destroyed their symbiotic relationship, the onslaught of World War II that same year led moderate Jewish militia leaders to continue to support British military forces. This greatly benefited the British less than a year later when Palestine was faced with the threat of invasion by Axis powers. They turned again to the Haganah, which created a special commando unit known as the Palmach. The Palmach were involved in a multitude of operations ranging from sabotage of enemy infrastructure, serving as navigators for allied forces in neighboring Syria and Lebanon, to repelling invading

forces long enough to allow British security forces retreat from Palestine safely while leaving the Jewish militias there to fend for themselves. The British were subsequently able to acquire Haganah cooperation and assistance in a joint-campaign against more radical militias. During these periods of engagement with the British, the Haganah developed professionally which was imperative for their transition from a militia to a professionally recognized force after the British departed.

However, the Labour Party's 1945 decision to uphold the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 mortally wounded the British relationship with the Haganah, ultimately requiring a major influx of British troops to maintain order. Not only did the Haganah finally reject the British engagement strategy, it formed an alliance with the radical militias that had been hunted only months earlier. As the security situation deteriorated, the British continually increased troop levels until they reached 100,000, one-tenth of their military. This was unsustainable, and the British were never able reopen lines of communication with the Haganah or any other Jewish militia. As a result, the security situation became so untenable that the British government was forced to turn the Mandate back over to the United Nations. This evidence suggests that a 28 year occupation dissolved within two years of the British adoption of a political position that alienated the Jewish population, and a military policy of non-engagement and defeat vis-à-vis the Jewish militias.

At the end of the day, a stable Israeli state was built upon the foundation of the militias anyway. Following the unexpected hand-over of the Palestine Mandate by the British, the UN was forced to adopt a policy of engagement that would encourage the use of militias by both Arabs and Jews. The UN did not possess the capability to provide administration, governance and security, which was desperately needed in the transition period. Therefore it engaged Haganah. Within six months the state of Israel was born, and the Haganah was transformed from an unofficial local militia to a professional standing army, which remains a formidable defense force sixty years later. The Haganah could serve as a potential model in Iraq of how the U.S. could employ militias as a provincial defense force that could play a greater role in maintaining stability while reducing unsustainable troops levels that the U.S. is currently experiencing. If the U.S.

strategy should involve the transition of security to a militia force then engagement needs to include different types of joint operations in order to evaluate and assess training, equipment and discipline standards – a process which took a decade in Palestine.

B.   SIMILARITIES REVEALED

Four major similarities between British strategies and recent U.S. initiatives are already in evidence. The first is the key role played by a small number of individual commanders who adopted a pragmatic course of action based on a critical analysis of the situation on the ground, which resulted in greater stability with fewer troops *and* mission accomplishment. Major Orde Wingate considered creative ways of containing the rising Arab insurgency in Palestine, and was ultimately authorized to establish the Special Night Squads, which utilized indigenous militia forces and their expansive knowledge of the area instead of more British soldiers. This led to an immediate defeat of insurgents responsible for the attacks, and helped prevent further sabotage of the Iraqi oil pipeline, which in turn helped stabilize the local economy. Colonel MacFarland recognized the use of militias as security providers in Anbar province in order to augment U.S. forces in Anbar province and drive out al Qaeda insurgents. This led to an immediate impact on an improved security situation that has also experienced an improvement in economic stability without the use of additional U.S. forces.

The *informal* recognition of militia forces as local security providers is the second similarity. In both cases, militia forces were not recognized as a legal source of security. Iraqi militias were considered antithetical to the Iraq's national security plan. Similarly, the British knew that Jewish militias existed but refused to recognize them and arrested known militia members.

However, in both cases the occupation forces formalized their relationship with the militias when faced with insurgencies that they could not otherwise contain -- the Arab insurgency of 1936 in Palestine and the al Qaeda/Sunni insurgency in Anbar province in 2006. The third similarity is the successful co-optation and use of militias in response to a rising insurgency and a shortage of occupation forces, essentially as a desperate stop gap measure. The Arab insurgency that began in 1936 fundamentally

altered the British position in Palestine, while U.S. forces had nearly lost control of Anbar province to Sunni insurgents in 2006. Both occupation forces employed local militias successfully to reduce violent attacks and increase stability of local neighborhoods. The Jewish Settlement Police and the Anbar Awakening each increased local stability, forestalling a need to increase occupation troop levels for a long duration. In both cases, this policy reversal was facilitated by a renaming of militias. Sunni militias became the Anbar Awakening, Concerned Local Citizens, and the Critical Infrastructure Guard Force, while Jewish militias became Special Night Squads, Jewish Settlement Police, and the Supernumerary force. The organizations, sanctioned by the occupation forces, were staffed by the very militias they had refused to recognize previously.

The fourth similarity involves the employment of militias during conventional operations. In both cases, militias became an important element in the overall military plan. In Iraq, the Kurdish Peshmerga was paramount in United States ability to defeat Saddam Hussein's forces in Northern Iraq. Alongside U.S. Special Forces troops, the Peshmerga was the main (indeed the only force) employed by U.S. military planners. The successful engagement of the Kurdish Peshmerga not only led to the defeat of Iraqi forces in the north but also contributed to the initial destruction of Ansar al Islam, a powerful insurgency that later would regroup and attempt to impact U.S. military operations during the occupation. The evidence clearly suggests that Ansar al Islam would have had a much greater impact on the U.S. military occupation of Iraq if the Special Forces and Peshmerga had not eliminated their initial base of operation during the invasion of Iraq. British forces had similarly turned to Jewish militias in Palestine when faced with the threat of invasion from Axis powers during World War II. Already facing a shortage of troops, the British were unable to successfully defend Palestine from a German invasion unassisted. Therefore, they sanctioned the Palmach (elite Jewish militia force) derived from the "technically illegal" Haganah. Supported by British training and funding, the Palmach would later serve as guides for allied armies and perform secret missions behind enemy lines. However, the clearest example of British need for militia support was the planned defense of Palestine by Jewish militias against

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an invading Axis army, which would have allowed British occupation forces to retreat safely. If Palestine had been occupied by an Axis military, Britain's plan called for Jewish militias to continue their resistance through the use of unconventional, guerilla tactics until the British military was capable of reinforcing them.

C.   AVENUES OF FUTURE RESEARCH

While the evidence presented here suggests that a military strategy of engaging is likely to be an efficacious security and stability strategy in Iraq, there are other aspects of the question that require further study. In the long-term security realm, the integration of militias into the national security architecture presents the possibility of segregating the country along sectarian lines, if the government is unable to negotiate a relationship of cooperation that will benefit both militia and government. Thus, the engagement of militias by U.S. forces could engender a federalized system established along sectarian lines, which could have serious political and security implications.

On the other hand, if U.S. policy succeeds in establishing a democratic regime in Iraq, this will necessarily mean the political dominance of the Shia population. Numerically, Iraq is home to approximately 14 million Shia, which represents sixty percent of the population. Iraqi democracy would therefore rest upon the traditions, values and cultures of the Shia. Militias have traditionally been part of their social organization since the revolts against British occupation in the 1920s, as they have been for the Kurds and Sunnis of Iraq.

If instead Iraq's government adopts a galvanizing strategy that alienates the non-Shia population, the political atmosphere will not be much different from Saddam Hussein's sultanistic regime. To maintain stability, the government will be forced to emphasize coercion rather than consensus, and local autonomy will be limited. However, in these circumstances militias are likely to continue to play a political and security role. Iraqi politics has long been based on central government negotiation with local strongmen, which results in a greater emphasis on services rendered at the local level by organized groups like militias.

Defeating conventional military forces in a traditional combat scenario is impossible for militias. The Mahdi Army attempted to defeat the Coalition during multiple uprisings in Najaf and Sadr City in the 2004 and was tactically defeated. However, unlike conventional forces militias can switch back and forth between conducting military operations and assuming the role of victim in order to gain popular political support. As Tartar notes, whereas "armed civilians are people without long-term political goals who seek only to free themselves from a foreign oppressor…militias like al-Sadr's Mahdi Army [are] operated by militants who are committed to the political goals of the group."[276] This is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

D.   IN CLOSING: A WORD ABOUT WORDS

There is a compelling need to redefine the term militia, freeing it of the negative connotations it has been given in the media and military and policy circles since 2003, to facilitate objective analysis in general, and of future U.S. policy options in particular. During the course of Iraqi occupation, the term militia has often been used to describe criminals, radical extremists, and insurgents. Militias have always been a part of Iraq's culture and performed valuable security and social services for their neighborhoods. Militias in Iraq are most accurately defined as "small homegrown, paramilitary-style brigades being formed by local tribes, religious leaders and political parties," which provide security to the local populace.[277]

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[276] B. Tatar, "Emergence of Nationalist Identity in Armed Insurrections: A Comparison of Iraq and Nicaragua," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2005): 183.

[277] Lionel Beehner, "Iraq: Militia Groups," Council on Foreign Relations, http://www.cfr.org/publication/8175/2007) (accessed April 28, 2007).

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